

BY THE SAME AUTHOR

THE ETHICAL AND RELIGIOUS
VALUE OF THE NOVEL

DRAMA, MUSIC-DRAMA, AND
RELIGION

SPIRITUAL AGNOSTICISM AND
THE SERMON ON THE
MOUNT, ETC.

THE ETHICAL AND
RELIGIOUS VALUE
OF THE DRAMA

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PREFACE

IN the following pages I have tried to bring before the reader the ethical and religious principles which underlie both ancient and modern drama. I hope I have succeeded in showing that the best drama brings its contributions and suggestions towards a philosophy of life, and, in its particular sphere, may be of more effective service for good than either theology or pedagogy. Far more people are influenced by Art and parable than by metaphysical arguments and moral appeals. The drama is coming into its own.

Literature has been defined as "a criticism of life." But the best modern drama is something more than that. Like great poetry, it is not only a criticism and an interpretation of life—it gives us also gleams and visions of what life might be and ought to be. If, as Dr W Macneile Dixon observes (amending a saying of Keats) in his thoughtful book on *Tragedy*—a book which I have only had the opportunity of reading since these pages were written—if "Tragedy is but a mirror of the process by which the intelligence acquires identity and becomes a soul," or a more deeply intelligent soul, then how great is the need for the study of the drama, and especially the tragic drama! For, do what we will, human life is so beset by limitations that the tragic fact in life awaits us all somewhere, and though it may not be wise to dwell overmuch on the fact, it is essential that we should train ourselves to meet it. As someone has said, every death-bed is a tragedy—a conflict of the forces of Life with the forces (or shadows) of Death. "The readiness is all." But before we can learn how to die we have to learn how to live. In that sort of education, drama—and especially the modern drama—may be a great

6 *The Ethical and Religious Value of the Drama*

help For while the ancient drama and the mediæval mystery-play made the spectator merely an onlooker of the actions and sufferings of men struggling in the hands of the higher powers—Fate, Nemesis, the gods—the best modern drama (especially the drama of Ibsen, Shaw, Galsworthy and others, the drama of discussion and personality) makes the spectator a part of the drama—a creative personality, for good or ill, in the making of life and the ordering of the spiritual forces which determine the destiny of the soul As we see our own foibles, weaknesses, casuistries, hypocrisies, and cowardices laid bare before our eyes we feel ourselves to be not merely, as Shaw has said, passive or “flattered spectators,” but “guilty creatures sitting at a play,” and so become a part of the drama, like the guilty King in *Hamlet*.

In ethical or religious language—in the ancient drama, as in the ancient and mediæval world of thought—Paradise and Hades, Heaven and Hell, were imposed as destinies on the soul by the inscrutable decrees of supernatural powers Under the shattering influence of the sciences of astronomy, geology, and biology, and the theory of evolution, these crude conceptions disappeared, only to reappear in more spiritual form in the theory of the immanence of the Spirit, with its corollaries of spiritual self-determination and “the Kingdom of God within” Modern drama, as we shall see, is already educating man into these new conceptions and obligations, making him a “fellow-labourer” with the Spirit. In the words of Blanco Posnet “He (the Spirit) wouldn’t have made us at all if He could have done His work without us”

If this book helps the reader to a more intelligent appreciation of the drama, and thereby to deepen or make identical in his own person, intelligence, soul, and Will, its purpose will have been accomplished

” B.

CAPE TOWN.

CONTENTS

PART I

	PAGE
I THE DRAMA OF JOB—(I) THE SCENE AND THE PROBLEM	11
II THE DRAMA OF JOB—(II) THE ANSWER	26
III THE "PROMETHEUS BOUND" OF ÆSCHYLUS	41
IV THE MYSTERY AND MORALITY PLAYS OF THE MIDDLE AGES PIETER DIESTENSIS' "EVERYMAN"	56
V SHAKESPEARE'S "KING LEAR" AND THE PROBLEM OF DIVINE JUSTICE	70
VI GOETHE'S "FAUST" AND THE SPIRITUAL EVOLUTION OF THE SOUL	82

PART II

VII SHELLEY'S "PROMETHEUS UNBOUND"	99
VIII IBSEN'S "BRAND" AND THE PROBLEM OF SELF-REALISATION—(I) THE SAINT	112
IX IBSEN'S "PEER GYNT" AND THE PROBLEM OF SELF-REALISATION—(II) THE SINNER	127
X TOLSTOI'S "THE POWER OF DARKNESS" NATURE <i>versus</i> NURTURE	139

8 *The Ethical and Religious Value of the Drama*

	PAGE
XI BERNARD SHAW'S "ANDROCIES AND THE LION" AND THE PROBLEM OF CHRISTIANITY <i>versus</i> MILITARISM .	152
XII BERNARD SHAW'S "METABIOLOGICAL" PLAYS	165
XIII BERNARD SHAW'S "SAINT JOAN"	181
XIV GALSWORTHY'S "THE FOREST" AND "JUSTICE"	197
XV THOMAS HARDY'S "THE DYNASTS" (I) . . .	209
XVI THOMAS HARDY'S "THE DYNASTS" (II) . . .	224
XVII CONCLUSION	239
INDEX	247

PART I

I

THE DRAMA OF JOB

(I) THE SCENE AND THE PROBLEM

THERE has always been an intimate connection and relation—though sometimes it is obscured—between religion and the drama. The great ideas and feelings, sympathies, emotions, and passions which move and inspire man's life are the theme and spiritual substance of both religion and the drama—at its best. Even in barbarous races and barbarous forms of religion, the choric dances, ritual, and sacrifices tend to take the form of drama. In ancient Greece the great festivals which were held to celebrate the worship of Dionysus gradually developed into dramatic form. Indeed, the drama, in every age, may be said to be conditioned by the great religious ideas and conceptions of the age in which it appears. Greek drama, for example, is dominated by the ideas of Retribution and Destiny. The Mystery plays and Passion plays of the Middle Ages are dominated by Roman Catholic conceptions of Sin, Death, Resurrection, and Judgment. The modern drama is dominated by psychological motives and the development of character and personality.

John Addington Symonds, in a chapter on ancient and modern tragedy, goes so far as to say that "the modern drama has no central idea. Our tragedy imports

no dominant religious or moral conception into the sphere of art" And this, because, "for the present, at any rate, science has deepened and complicated our most distressing problems, has rendered the anxiety of man about his destiny still more cruel, has made him still more helpless in the effort to comprehend his relations to the universe, by seeming to prove that his most cherished hypotheses are mere illusions" ¹ Those words, written thirty years ago, were probably true of the time they were written, for both the poetry and the drama of the time were infected by the prevailing agnosticism. But new and great dramatists have since come into the field, and I think we shall see, as a result of our study, that the psychological delineation of character and the development of personality have become a dominant influence in modern drama, and that these may be called deeply ethical and religious motives. For what is religion, at bottom, but the sum of the forces which move and make personality—love, joy, courage, long-suffering, kindness, faithfulness, spiritual insight, self-control? Indeed, some of the most poignant forms of tragedy are caused by the conflict of religious ideas and feelings—as in the drama of Job, many of the ancient Greek dramas, Shelley's *Prometheus Unbound*, and Ibsen's *Brand* and *Emperor and Galilean*. The scientific study of the law of heredity, the influence of environment and early training and education, have all helped to make the study of the manifestation and development of character and personality in drama of absorbing interest. And the development of personality is surely the end and aim of religion. It is the aim of dramatic art to show personality in struggle and conflict with itself, with hereditary taints and influences, with "defects of doubt and taints of blood," with family and social conventions, with the power of money, with political

¹ *Studies of the Greek Poets*, vol. II pp. 138, 144

and social intrigues, with Nature, Fate, and Destiny. The form of the struggle changes as the dominating ideas change, and it is interesting to note how, as the great dramatists "hold the mirror up to Nature" in each succeeding age, personality changes and develops also as it faces the eternal mysteries of Life, Love, spiritual conflict, Death, and Eternity

The drama of Job, for example, deals with one of the gravest problems which beset the human mind—the mystery of suffering, and especially the mystery of undeserved suffering—children born to suffer and die from hereditary disease because, in Biblical phrase, "the fathers have eaten sour grapes", the undeserved sufferings of the innocent in war, the tortures inflicted on saintly men and women in religious persecutions, the inevitable pains of disease and the slow decay of the faculties in old age, the cruel death of multitudes suddenly overwhelmed by natural catastrophes—"the hand of God," famine, earthquake, or shipwreck. Why should the innocent suffer? That is the problem of the drama of Job, and it brings before us the whole question of the ways of God to man and of man's relation to God

The drama of Job has been much misunderstood, and it has sometimes been ludicrously interpreted. The average Bible reader still looks upon it merely as a lesson in patience! Even the great theologians of the past have often gone utterly astray in their attempts at spiritual and theological interpretation. They have read all sorts of meanings into it. They have allegorised it. They have said that Job represents the Jewish nation, that he stands for the coming Christ, that his seven sons represent the seven-fold gifts of the Spirit, that his sheep represent the true disciples, and his camels, his oxen, and his asses represent respectively the Gentiles, the Jews, and the Samaritans—with much more alle-

gorical nonsense of the same sort. It is only since the rise of the Higher Criticism that the book has received the attention it deserves. Every thoughtful student of it now feels that it is as one of those mountain peaks in literature which mark the stages of man's moral and spiritual growth. No one knows when it was written, no one knows where it was written. Its authorship is unknown. The drama owes its greatness to the sublimity of its conceptions and language, to the truth of its reflections on human experience, and to the fact that it deals with the most perplexing and poignant mystery in human life.

Let me recall the chief features and incidents in the drama. The actual scene is unknown, but as the chief character in the drama is spoken of as living in the land of Uz, the scene was probably in or near the borders of Edom, in Asia Minor. The surroundings are pastoral. Job is represented as a patriarch, chieftain, or pastoral prince, but the allusions and the thought of the drama show an advanced rather than a primitive type of civilisation. Job, then, is a great chieftain in the land of Uz—a fearless, upright, and honourable man, one who serves God and eschews evil. His sheep, his camels, his asses, and his oxen are numbered by the thousand, and he has a great household. In private and in public life he is widely respected and revered. He was the father of the oppressed and those who had none to help them. He “put on righteousness as a garment,” and his justice was “as a robe and a diadem.” He was “eyes to the blind and feet to the lame,” a father to the poor and needy, and he caused the widow's heart to sing for joy.

A council is held in the courts of Heaven (reminding us of the prologue to *Faust*), and amongst those present is Satan. And God (the Hebrew Yahweh) said unto Satan.

"Hast thou considered my servant Job? for there is none like him in the earth—a perfect and an upright man."

And Satan answered Yahweh and said "Doth Job fear God for nought? But put forth Thy hand now and touch all that he hath and he will renounce Thee to Thy face"

That is, the suggestion of Satan is that Job's uprightness is but a fair-weather virtue. Take away his happiness and prosperity, says Satan, and you will find out what he really is—a weak man, ready to do evil if by evil he can regain prosperity. The insinuation goes to the very roots of character. Is our conduct governed by some great principle or ideal, or is it controlled and motivated by expediency and the mean interests which centre in self?

Then Yahweh gave unto Satan power over Job, over his property, his family, and ultimately over his health, in order to try his faithfulness, to see whether, as Satan avers, he is righteous simply because righteousness has brought him prosperity. So Satan causes many afflictions to fall upon Job. His oxen are stolen, his sheep are destroyed by a storm, his camels are stolen by a marauding tribe, his servants are slain, his sons and daughters are killed in a whirlwind—yet Job is faithful through all. He still holds fast to his ideal of righteousness, to God. "Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither. Yahweh gave, and Yahweh hath taken away, blessed be the name of Yahweh"

But worse evils are to come. Job is stricken with grievous, loathsome, and painful diseases, with boils from head to foot—probably some form of leprosy—which make life an intolerable burden to him. So long as we have health and strength we can set ourselves to bear anything, but the intolerable weakness of sickness and pain brings us very low. His wife, who has

16 *The Ethical and Religious Value of the Drama*

uttered no word of complaint when household goods and pastoral wealth and the savings of a lifetime have gone, who has silently borne her grief when the children were taken away, now breaks down in the presence of this helpless pain

"Dost thou still hold fast thine integrity?" she says
"Renounce God, and die"

But Job rebukes her

"Thou speakest as one of the foolish women. What shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil?"

The story of the misfortunes and sufferings of the great chieftain had spread far and wide, and three friends of Job, men of substance and renown—Eliphaz the Temanite, Bildad the Shuhite, and Zophar the Naamathite—come to condole with him and comfort him. Like Job, they are devout and upright men, sincerely concerned for the material and spiritual welfare of their friend. So altered is Job by his sufferings and his frightful disease that his friends hardly know him, and they lift up their voice and weep. With the slowness of mind and speech characteristic of pastoral races, they sit with him day after day and night after night in that sympathetic silence which only friends can bear, for they saw that his suffering and grief were very great.

Job begins to unburden himself, and to curse the day in which he was born.

"Wherefore is light given to him that is in misery, and life unto the bitter in soul?"

Or why cannot he be gathered with his fathers in the land of darkness and death, "where the wicked cease from troubling and the weary are at rest"? He longs for death, "but it cometh not," for "the thing which I feared hath come upon me, and that which I am afraid of cometh unto me."

How many thousands of men and women, when the doctor has pronounced the word cancer, or tuberculosis, or locomotor-ataxy, have given utterance to the same thoughts!

Then, gently at first and with mild suggestiveness, the three friends in turn begin to offer Job advice and consolation.

“If one assay to commune with thee, wilt thou be grieved? Whoever perished, being innocent? Or where were the righteous cut off? Shall mortal man be more just than God? Happy is the man whom God reproveth, therefore despise not thou the chastening of the Almighty.” Yes, thou, friend Job, must have sinned, or God would not have chastened thee in this way. Confess thy sins before God, and return to thine integrity, and “peace shall dwell in thy tent,” and scourge and calamity shall depart from thee. If thou wert truly pure and upright, of a certainty God “would awake for thee and make the habitation of thy righteousness prosperous and bring peace unto thy tent.”

In this strain do each of the three friends offer consolation unto Job. Now in order to understand this line of argument it is necessary to bear in mind that, to the ancient Hebrews, it was an article of faith that their God, Yahweh, ordered and controlled the life of Nature and of man in all power and goodness, and that any evil that fell upon man was a punishment for his sins. To the problem of undeserved suffering they had one answer, which was this: Yahweh is the only true God, terrible in His might, but just and righteous in all His dealings, and full of mercy and lovingkindness to those who faithfully serve Him and walk in His ways. “Yahweh ordereth a good man’s going”, “the righteous are never forsaken,” their children “beg not their bread.” So, too, with the nation. Let the people do justice and judgment, let them write Yahweh’s law in their heart,

18 *The Ethical and Religious Value of the Drama*

and He will forgive their transgressions and bring prosperity to His people That is, Job's friends virtually say to him, that inasmuch as the Almighty has sent this suffering upon him, he (Job) must have deserved it That ancient belief lingers yet in some quarters But the modern mind, with its belief in the reign of Law, sees no necessary connection between earthquakes and sin, famine and moral turpitude, cancer and moral depravity And the author of Job takes the modern view His spiritual insight is much deeper and takes a wider sweep than the conventional platitudes of his orthodox friends. Job bursts out in indignation against their well-meant but wordy consolations He has borne with his calamities and his afflictions, but he cannot bear that those from whom he expected comfort and sympathy should doubt that very thing which is dearer to him than life itself—his integrity, his uprightness He knows, indeed, that no man is perfect, but he knows also that he has tried to order his life in justice and righteousness, and that his sufferings are out of all proportion to his deserts In the bitterness of his suffering and disappointment he pours out the strength of his feeling and passion, spurning the received doctrine, turning indignantly from the windy consolations of his friends, praying to have his wrong-doing revealed—yea, upbraiding the Power which brought him into being, and longing for the last sleep of death. How like that is to our own feelings in time of trouble! With what deep insight does this unknown author penetrate to the deepest feelings of the human heart!

“ My soul is weary of my life,
I will give free course to my complaint,
I will speak in the bitterness of my soul,
I will say unto God, ‘ Do not condemn me ’
Is it good unto Thee that Thou should'st oppress?
That Thou should'st despise the work of Thine hands?

Thou inquest after mine iniquity
And searchest after my sin,
Although thou knowest that I am not wicked,
And there is none that can deliver me out of Thine hand
I despise my life
It is all one,
Therefore I say He destroyeth the perfect and the wicked ”
“Thine hands have framed me and fashioned me
Together round about, yet Thou dost destroy me ”
“Hast Thou not poured me out as milk,
And curdled me like cheese ? ”
“Wherefore hast Thou brought me forth out of the womb ? ”
“Are not my days few ? Cease, then,
And let me alone, that I may take comfort a little
Before I go whence I shall not return,
Even to the land of darkness and of the shadow of death ”

“Thou hast poured me out as milk and curdled me like cheese”—how many thousands, how many scores of thousands, of young men in every belligerent country, some of the finest brains and hearts of their time, beloved “temples of the spirit,” full of the treasures of knowledge and of love—how many might have uttered those words during the Great War, their lives spilt like water on the ground ! While the Elphazes, the Bildads, and the Zophars of the time complacently accept their sacrifices, or meet the problem of their sufferings, and terrors, and agonised cries, with windy nothings !

The three friends of Job are shocked and pained at his outburst Job himself, they say, has beforetime essayed to instruct many, and his words have upholden the weak, but now that trouble has come upon him he faints and falls away

“Oh, that God would speak
And open His lips against thee,”

then thou wouldst know

“That God exacteth of thee less than thine iniquity deserveth.
Canst thou by searching find out God ?

20 *The Ethical and Religious Value of the Drama*

Canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection ?
It is high as heaven , what canst thou do ?
Deeper than Sheol (the grave), what canst thou know ? ”
“ What is man that he should be clean ?
And he that is born of woman that he should be righteous ? ”
“ If iniquity be in thine hand, put it far away,
And let not unrighteousness dwell in thy tents ,
Then thou shalt be steadfast, and shall not fear,
For thou shall forget thy misery ”
“ Why doth thine heart carry thee away ?
And why do thine eyes wink ?
That thou turnest thy spirit against God,
And lettest such words go out of thy mouth ! ”

But Job retorts with even greater irony and indignation—the indignation born of undeserved suffering

“ No doubt but ye are the people
And wisdom shall die with you !
But I have understanding as well as you ,
I am not inferior to you ”
“ Miserable comforters are ye all ”
“ Your sayings are proverbs of ashes ,
Your defences are defences of clay
Hold your peace, let me alone, that I may speak,
And let come on me what will
Though He slay me yet will I wait for Him
And maintain my ways before Him
Let me speak, and answer Thou me—
How many are mine iniquities and sins ?
Wherefore hidest Thou thy face
And holdest me for Thine enemy ? ”
“ My face is foul with weeping,
And on my eyelids is the shadow of death ,
Although there is no violence in mine hands,
And my prayer is pure ”

Then he descends into the deeps of pessimism

“ I loathe my life , I would not live always
Let me alone, for my days are vanity ”

And there follow those great words which we hear at every graveside

"Man that is born of a woman
Is of few days, and full of trouble
He cometh forth like a flower, and is cut down,
He fleeth also as a shadow and continueth not . .
As the waters are gone from the sea,
And the river decayeth and drieth up,
So man lieth down and riseth not"—

a passage reminding us of the cry of the modern poet

"What is it all but the trouble of ants
In the gleam of a million million suns ?"
"Rain, sun, and rain—and where is he who knows ?
From the great deep, to the great deep, he goes"

Yea, says Job,

"The tents of robbers prosper,
And the just, the perfect man, is a laughing-stock"
"What is the Almighty that we should serve Him ?
And what profit should we have if we pray unto Him ?"
"He multiplieth my wounds without cause"
"Behold I cry out against wrong, but I am not heard
I cry for help, but there is no judgment"

The three friends are more pained than before, and return upon Job one after the other, with warmth, severity, and upbraiding. This, they say, is the very obstinacy of wickedness. Job is a blasphemer, a heretic. He dares to scorn the received doctrine, to challenge God, Himself. How dare he question that which has been received for generations?—the very language of timid conservatism in every age!

"What knoweth thou that we know not ?"
"What understandest thou which is not in us ?
Art thou the first man that was born ?
With us are both grey-headed men and the very aged men,
Much elder than thy father"

22 *The Ethical and Religious Value of the Drama*

"Thine iniquity teacheth thy mouth,
And thine own lips testify against thee,
Yea, thou doest away with fear
And restrainest devotion before God"
"Thy wickedness *must* be great,
Neither is there any end to thine iniquities,
For thou hast taken pledges of thy brother for nought,
And stripped the naked of their clothing"
"The wicked man travaileth with pain all his days
His prosperity shall not endure
God shall cast the fierceness of His wrath upon him,
And shall rain it upon him while he is eating"

That is, Job's wickedness is proved by his sufferings and his calamities! What is the use arguing with such people? Their sayings are "proverbs of ashes" and their defences are "defences of clay" Job turns away from them, and his language becomes calmer and more impressive. His very friends have done what Satan himself could not do—they have unhinged for a time his faith. But now he strikes the true note. The gleam of light which had flickered in darkness and doubt shines out clearly once more. But it does not come from the orthodox doctrines of his short-sighted but well-meaning friends. That he still rejects—but he appeals again, with less of anger and more of dignity and reverence than before, from man's narrowness and short-sightedness to the spirit of Eternal Justice, from earth's and Nature's cruelty and injustice to the invisible justice of God. In a powerful speech—a speech which shows a wide knowledge and a large experience of life—he sums up the broken remnants of his faith. It is true that the wicked often prosper.

"Yea, they are mighty in power,
Their houses are safe from fear,
Neither is the rod of God upon them"

But their support is not in their wickedness. The

unfailing support of the good man is in his integrity.
Therefore—

“Till I die I will not put away mine integrity from me,
My righteousness I hold fast and will not let it go
My heart shall not reproach me as long as I live” . .
“I was a father to the needy
And the cause of him that I knew not I searched out
I was eyes to the blind,
And feet was I to the lame
The blessing of him that was ready to perish came upon me .
And I caused the widow’s heart to sing for joy.
I put on righteousness, and it clothed me.
My justice was as a robe and a diadem ”

Therefore

“Let me be weighed in an even balance
That God may know mine integrity.
For I know that my Vindicator liveth,
And apart from my flesh shall I see God ”

The mystery of the material world is too deep for me,
he virtually says—“man’s wisdom compasseth it not,
neither is it found in the land of the living ” :

“The deep saith it is not in me
And the sea saith it is not in me
God understandeth the way thereof,
And He knoweth the place thereof
He bindeth up the waters in His thick clouds,
And hangeth the earth upon nothing
By His spirit the heavens are garnished ,
The pillars of heaven tremble
And are astonished at His rebuke
Yea, He meteth out the waters by measure,
And maketh a way for the lightning of the thunder ”
“Lo, these are but the outskirts of His ways,
And how little a portion do we hear of Him ! ”
“Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom ,
And to depart from evil is understanding ”

24 *The Ethical and Religious Value of the Drama*

That is Job's answer to the problem of undeserved suffering. It is the agnostic's answer. It is 'one of the mysteries which we can never fathom here. In the conclusion of the drama we shall see what God's answer was—or, rather, what this unknown writer conceives God's answer might be—and we shall be able to compare it with a modern answer, as given by Mr H. G. Wells in one of the most interesting of his novels, *The Undying Fire*, where a modern Job, afflicted with cancer, and with a modern Eliphaz, a Bildad, and a Zophar, struggles with the same problem.

Meanwhile, let me emphasise briefly four points in the drama on which we might fix our attention. First, the underlying thought of the author, that we must not shut our eyes to any of the facts of life, that we must strive to "see life steadily and see it whole," that to attempt to fit the facts arbitrarily to our religious theories instead of making our theories conform to the facts, is to fall into short-sighted and narrow dogmatism. Second, that the author's description of the "righteous" man, in its ethical discernment of social duty, is a far higher ideal of public life and character than that which we find amongst many Christian people to-day. One sentence goes to the root of the whole matter. Did not He that made me make my brother also? Did He not fashion us in the same secret ways and bring us through the same gate of Life? It is an anticipation of the later teaching of the fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man. Third, notice that in all his despair Job never lets go of the Eternal verities—that the pursuit of Truth in a life of active righteousness is the one clue to life's mysteries. Carlyle simply echoes here the thought of this unknown writer of two thousand three hundred years ago: "Do the duty which lies nearest thee—thy second duty will already have become clearer."

And lastly, note the beautiful personification of

Wisdom in Chapter XXVIII, and also the deep cry for Rest which finds utterance again and again, and breathes, as it were, from the very heart of the poem Rest, Rest, and peace—that is the cry of suffering human nature everywhere It touches a deep and universal chord The clods of the valley will be sweet to us We shall go the way whence we shall not return, and on which unnumbered generations have gone before—why then should we fear? “The fear of the Lord” of Love—that is, the fear to be untrue to the still small voice within, the fear to hurt, or maim, or injure, the sweet and gentle spirit which surely abides somewhere in all our hearts—“*that* is wisdom, and to depart from evil, that is understanding ”

II

THE DRAMA OF JOB—*continued*

(II) THE ANSWER

WE have seen that the answer of the patriarch Job, the chief character in the drama, to the problem of undeserved suffering, is an inconclusive and unsatisfying answer. He falls back upon the mystery which surrounds our life, and upon a conscientious sense of personal righteousness and integrity, aided by wisdom, as the spiritual weapons with which to face the mystery. The speech of Elihu, which follows the speeches of the three friends, is thought by some to be an interpolation by another hand, and in any case it merely re-echoes, in the main, the arguments of the three friends, and interferes with the dramatic climax of the book—that is, the answer of God himself to the tragic fact which is the essence of the drama. This answer, of course, is the author's conception of what God's answer would be, both to Job and the three friends.

"Then Yahweh, the Lord, answered Job out of the whirlwind," and his first words strike the keynote of the answer

"Who is this that darkeneth counsel
By words without knowledge?
Gird up now thy loins like a man,
For I will demand of thee, and declare thou unto Me

Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth ?
Declare if thou hast understanding,
Who determined the measures thereof, if thou knowest ?
Whereupon were the foundations thereof fastened ?
Or who laid the cornerstone thereof,
When the morning stars sang together,
And all the sons of God shouted for joy ? ”

That is the keynote—the *transcendence* of the mysterious Spirit of God over the limited, finite life of Nature and of man. In sublime language everything is passed in review—the proud waves of the sea, the dawn, the dayspring, the recesses of the deep, the treasures of the snow and the hail, the lightning and the thunder, the clouds, the rain, the tender grass, the “ordinances of the heavens,” the wild goat and the wild ass and their young, the blind instinct of the ostrich, the way of the eagle with her claws red with blood, the pride of the wicked and their downfall, the wisdom of the heart and the subtleties of the mind, the “gates of the shadow of death,” the wondrous organisation and strength of behemoth and leviathan—all these are brought before us, with occasional taunts at the limited mind and understanding of man.

“Doubtless, thou knowest, for thou wast then born,
And the number of thy days is great ! ”

That is, the mysteries of life and the universe transcend the mind and understanding of man, as the mind of man transcends the brain of the caterpillar or the ant. To understand the secrets of Infinity and Eternity—attributes of the Supreme—one must be as God Himself, and understand the secret reservoirs whence come the issues of life. The finite cannot embrace or comprehend the Infinite.

It may be said that this is no answer to the problem of undeserved suffering. That is true. It is not I doubt whether there can be an answer on this side

28 *The Ethical and Religious Value of the Drama*

the veil The tragic fact seems to be an inevitable part of the experience of life, and to be inwrought in the very structure of the universe *as we know it* It may be that, as we shall see later, hints and gleams towards a solution may be found in the thought that all Life is One, and that, being members one of another, the redemption of the part can only be accomplished by the redemption of the whole, through the labour and the suffering of all But that is not the answer of the book of Job Our only attitude so far is—Silence, and the bowed head

But that is not the end of the drama If the Almighty—or the author of the drama—has no answer to the questionings of Job, he certainly has an answer to the narrow and dogmatic theories of the three friends, for he makes God himself rebuke their want of sympathy and vision, and he evidently prefers the honest doubts and rebellious pessimism of the patriarch. For after Job has confessed his error, saying :

“ I have uttered that which I understood not,
Things too wonderful for me which I knew not,
Wherefore I loathe my words, and repent
In dust and ashes,”

God calls Eliphaz the Temanite and says unto him .

“ My wrath is kindled against thee, and against thy two friends, for ye have not spoken of Me the thing that is right, as My servant Job hath Now, therefore, take unto you seven bullocks and seven rams, and go to My servant Job, and offer up for yourself a burnt-offering, and My servant Job shall pray for you, for him will I accept that I deal not with you according to your folly, for ye have not spoken of Me the thing that is right as My servant, Job, hath . So Yahweh blessed the latter end of Job more than his beginning, and he had fourteen thousand sheep and six thousand

camels, and one thousand yoke of oxen, and a thousand she-asses", and his family and friends again came unto him and did eat bread with rejoicing. So Job lived and died full of days and honour.

"My servant Job shall pray for you" is a delightful touch. It is like Socrates praying for his judges, Shelley for the orthodox folk who drove him from Oxford, or Charles Bradlaugh for those who expelled him from the House of Commons. The meaning is obvious. It is *not* true that when a man suffers through the working of Nature's laws he is therefore necessarily guilty of sin. These are "proverbs of ashes."

The ending of the drama recalls to one's mind the familiar legend of Abou Ben Adhem, who inquired of the angel whether his name was inscribed amongst those "who love the Lord."

"'Nay, not so,'

Replied the angel. Abou spoke more low,
But cheerily still, and said, 'I pray thee, then,
Write me as one who loves his fellow-men.'
The angel wrote and vanished. The next night
It came again with a great wakening light,
And showed the names of those whom God had blessed,
And lo! Ben Adhem's name led all the rest."

Such is this drama of Job, standing like a monument amid the literature and the religious customs of a dark age, and giving the only answer it is possible to give to the deepest and most troubled questionings of the human heart. The only answer, but not by any means a complete answer. We see so little that a complete answer is impossible. We see only in part and we know only in part. We know, indeed, that the reign of Law, though it crushes, as of necessity, both the just and the unjust in its undeviating course, yet upholds and brings inestimable benefits to all, and that, deprived of reliance

upon this reign of Law, our last state would be worse than our first. We know also that when, in our complex life, the hardships of Law fall heavily and undeservedly upon the innocent, our greatest support in the hour of trial is the consciousness that we have tried to do our best, and that we would prefer this consciousness to all the wealth and all the honours in the world. Give the unjust man all he desires, place mountains of wealth at his disposal—should we change places with him, and go down to our graves with unnumbered accusing voices sounding in our ears, reminding us of the deeds we could never undo and the injustice we could never remedy? The general law is, indeed, that righteousness, integrity, does bring contentment, honour, prosperity. But there are many exceptions. The good often suffer persecution, social ostracism, and sometimes martyrdom. And calamity comes to good and bad alike. Sunshine, and storm, and famine fall on good and evil alike, but, as George Eliot truly says “Calamity falling on a base mind is the one form of sorrow which has no balm in it”

It is interesting to compare that ancient drama with a modern version of the same problem in a modern setting, as told by Mr H G Wells in his interesting novel, *The Undying Fire*. In outline the story follows the lines of the ancient drama. There is the scene in Heaven between God and Satan modernised. There is a modern Job, Job Huss—a combination, in name, of the ancient patriarch and the modern heretic—a great schoolmaster, who has fallen on evil days. An epidemic of disease runs through the school, an assistant master is killed by an explosion, a fire breaks out in the school-house in which two boys are burnt to death, his oldest friend commits suicide, a letter from his solicitors informs him that the savings and investments of a life-time have disappeared, leaving him a ruined man; news comes from the front that his only boy has been

killed in the German lines, and finally Mr Huss himself falls seriously ill, and the doctor diagnoses the disease as cancer. Yet Job Huss has been a most conscientious, single-minded, and public-spirited man. By his methods of education and the fine spirit of service, which he has introduced into the minds and lives of his pupils, he has raised his school to the level of the best in England. His boys have not been mere schoolboys to him. He has been to them as a father and a friend, and his old pupils everywhere, as they go out into the world, speak of him in terms of reverence and affection. But these overwhelming calamities, coming one upon another, and especially this monstrous and horrible disease, have brought him very low, and the old, old question forces itself insistently upon him. Why should such things be? "To the limits of my strength and knowledge," he says, "I have served God—and now, in this hour of darkness, where is the God that I have served?" As he lies on his bed of pain he passes in review not only his own case, but the whole evolution of conscious life upon this planet, with its unceasing struggle with cruelty, pain, and death. The fungus growths of the forest, the strangulating plants, the poisonous seeds and toadstools, the thorns and the cacti, the verminous and insect parasites which hide in them—what are these but a type of all life? And as we proceed higher in the scale of life the cruelty becomes more intentional, foreseeing, and deliberate—implanted by instinct in the very nature of the beast. The butcher-bird and its helpless victims, that other bird, the kea, which plunges its talons into the wool of the young sheep and then proceeds to peck at its vitals, the tiger, the snake, the cat playing with the mouse, the parasites and the invisible germs which prey upon all, the arachnids, worms, liver fluke, and lowlier things which are so formed and adapted as to live on the living and suffering tissues of their victims;

the beetles, for example, which lay their eggs in living bodies to germinate there, and then, emerging into life, slowly gnaw their victims to death, and lastly, Man, with his horrible diseases, which rot his bones and his lungs, and eat slowly and insidiously into his very frame. And even in his intellect how small and mean and malignant does he become when, in his hatreds, his persecutions, his vivisections, and his wars, he sets his ingenuity to work to invent the most terrible instruments of torture and destruction, and turns even war itself and the agonising sacrifices of its victims into a means and an opportunity for profit—like the brutes who pierce the eyes of their singing-birds with a needle, so that, through their blindness and their suffering, they may sing the more sweetly for their owner's pleasure and profit! An all-good and all-powerful God! cries Job Huss almost in the very words of his prototype—"Why, he destroyeth the perfect and the wicked alike, yea, the tents of robbers prosper while the just man is a laughing-stock. Cease, then, and let me alone, that I may go in peace unto the way whence I shall not return."

In this frame of mind Job Huss is visited by three friends, members of the governing board of the school, Sir Elphaz Burrows, Mr. William Dad, and Mr. Joseph Farr—note the names. The conversation inevitably drifts on to religious subjects, and the three friends are shocked to find that this man, to whom they have entrusted the religious education and upbringing of their boys, and who has been supposed by all who know him to be a teacher of unimpeachable orthodoxy, now, under stress of calamity, is giving utterance to the most dreadful heresies. I need not repeat the arguments. They are of the usual order, but modernised. It is sufficient to say that, like Job of old, Job Huss is more deeply confirmed than ever in his doubts and heresies by the foolish theories and arguments of his friends. But the

remnants of his faith begin to shape themselves into a new form. He refuses any longer to identify the Power which is responsible for the cruelties of the universe with the sacred name of God. There is something higher than that Power in the human heart, and therefore in the universe—the Spirit of love, joy, righteousness, peace, wisdom, which is everywhere trying to alleviate and end these cruelties. That Spirit is “the undying fire.” For “now that my heavens are darkened,” he says, “now that my eyes have been opened to the wretchedness, futility, and horror in the texture of life, I still cling, I cling more than ever, to the Spirit of righteousness within me. ‘My righteousness I hold fast and I will not let it go.’ If there is no God, no mercy, no human kindness in the great frame of space and time, if life is a writhing torment, an itch upon one little planet, and the stars away there in the void no more than huge empty flares signifying nothing, then all the brighter shines the flame of God (the Spirit) in my heart.”

A new interest is introduced into the story by the entry of Dr. Elihu Barrack. He is of a well-known type—a smart, clever, scientific, up-to-date agnostic, believing neither in God nor in immortality. He simply laughs to scorn what he calls the “spook theories” of Sir Elphaz, who has been trying to persuade Job that God will make everything right in the next world. And as for this “undying fire,” this Spirit of God in man to which Job Huss pins his last shred of faith—well, he has no use for that either.

“I have had my eyes pretty wide open at the universe ever since I came into it,” he says, “and not only have I never seen, nor heard of, nor smelt, nor touched a ghost or spirit, Sir Elphaz, but I have never seen a gleam or sign of this Providence, this great God of the world of yours, or of this minor and modern God

that Mr Huss has taken up In the hearts of men I have found malformations, ossifications, clots, and fatty degeneration, but never a God The only thing to do in this world," he continues, "is to learn the laws of the universe, the rules of the game, then stand up to it and 'Be yourself' You may be the bit of marble that may be left in the statue, or you may be the bit of marble that is thrown away You can't help it any way Play the game, and *be yourself*"

But this cold creed is almost as repulsive to Job as the childish creeds of his three friends It is a confession of failure and submission to the God of things as they are But the "undying fire," the divine Spirit in Job's heart, tells him that, as far as human life is concerned, this divine Spirit, working supremely through the minds of the few who think, and feel, and know, is eternally re-creating the world in a diviner spiritual image A few teachers and poets like Isaiah, Plato, Jesus, Dante, Shelley, have seen it and have been possessed by it, but the mass of mankind—because, in their indifference and materialism, they have worshipped the God of things as they are, heedless of history, heedless of the great truths of the Spirit which bind mankind in one—the mass of mankind, worshipping this idol of the mind, has often lost its way in futilities, in hatreds, in persecutions, and in wars—yea, even in schools and churches it has glorified slaughter and taught its youth that the highest honours are to be found in the inventions and efficient uses of the instruments of destruction and death "And these things have happened," says Job, "because the technical education of men has been better than their historical and social education Once men have lost touch with, or failed to apprehend, that idea of a single human community, that idea which is the substance of all true history and the essential teaching of God, it is towards such organised abominations

[as national hatreds and militarism] that they drift—necessarily ”

“ But why bring in God ? ” asks Dr Barrack “ God is a word that has become associated with all sorts of black and cruel things—priesthoods, orthodoxies, persecutions Why do you not call this upward and onward power Humanity ? Why do you not call it the Spirit of Man ? ”

“ Because,” answers Job, “ I have already shown it is not humanity, it is not the spirit of men ” Humanity, the spirit of men, made the machine-gun and the torpedo, poison gas, and the submarine, and the tank, and the one-hundred ton gun, and fools take pride in them instead of shame “ The spirit of man is jealous, aggressive, and partisan It is often animated by fear and hatred, secrecy and conspiracy—has greed and competition in the grain But the Spirit of God of which I speak rises above fear, above hatred, above secrecy, conspiracy, and greed He condemns all cruelty and all evil He seizes upon and brings out and confirms all that is generous in the natural impulses of the mind ” “ I will not pretend to explain what I cannot explain,” concludes Job It may be that God, the Spirit of God, is as yet only foreshadowed in life. You may reason, Dr Barrack, that this fire in the heart that I call God is as much the outcome of your process as all the other things in life I cannot argue against that What I am telling you now is not what I believe so much as what I feel . . . To me it seems that the creative desire that burns in me is a thing different in its nature from the blind process of matter, it is a force running contrariwise to the power of confusion This I do know, that once it is lit in man it is like a consuming fire It summons him to live the residue of his days working and fighting for the unity and release and triumph of mankind . . . Some ancient phrases

live marvellously," he adds, after a pause "Within my heart I know that my Redeemer (the Spirit of Wisdom and Love) liveth "

At this moment the big surgeon from London enters the room. Arrangements are immediately made for the operation. Job is put under chloroform, and lo! the surgeon discovers that it is a case of wrong diagnosis. It is not a cancer from which Job suffers, but a tumour which is easily removed. Health and strength soon return, news is brought that his son, who was reported killed in the war, had only been taken prisoner, and that an exchange of prisoners has been arranged, the further news, that the securities in which his savings were invested have recovered in value, messages of sympathy come from old pupils in all parts of the world, by which it becomes manifest that the school has been a centre of light and inspiration for the youth of England, and Job's latter end is blessed even more than his beginning.

In comparing the ancient dramatist with the modern novelist and student of social affairs, both of whom obviously deal with the same theme, the question arises, Has Mr Wells arrived any nearer to the solution of the problem than that ancient unknown writer? And the answer is, essentially, No. But there is an important difference in emphasis and attitude. The ancient writer emphasises the *transcendence* of God and his hero abases himself "in dust and ashes" before the Supreme. Mr. Wells emphasises the *immanence* of God, which he calls "the undying fire," or the divine spirit within, and his hero stands on his feet, as it were, and demands from his Creator and from his fellow-men the opportunity to develop and perfect the spirit with which he has been endowed. That means an important difference in religious attitude.

Since that ancient writer wrote his drama three great personalities have given their spirit and teaching to the

world—Jesus of Nazareth, Socrates, and Plato—and the teachings of a fourth, the Buddha, living before that ancient writer, have been made more widely known throughout the West, and in the East have gathered adherents more numerous than those of Christianity. All these great religious teachers, aided by the poets, from Plato to Shelley, have emphasised this idea of the immanence of the Spirit. And it is here that Mr Wells has an advantage over that great unknown writer—he was born into a greater spiritual inheritance. Obviously, as Mr Wells points out, though he does not sufficiently stress the fact, “the undying fire” of love, and aspiration, and courage in the heart of man could not spring up there spontaneously or out of nothing. That, too, must have a source, a parent. As Carlyle and Emerson said. “It is inconceivable that intellectual and moral emotion could be put into us by an entity that has none of its own.” Once grant that and we are back at the fatherhood, or the motherhood, or the parenthood of the Spirit. But that does not solve the problem either, because the spirit of fear, of hatred, and of cruelty, whether in the snake, the cancer germ, or in the heart of man, seems to spring from the same source. But there is this vital difference—a difference which tells in favour of religion—that love and courage are positive and creative in their effects, creative of fuller life always and everywhere, while fear and hatred and cruelty are poisonous and destructive in their effects, and bring about their own defeat and death. We do not make the spiritual laws which determine these differences any more than we make the laws which determine the stars in their courses. Here, we are in the grip of the old problem of the nature of evil—the problem which John Stuart Mill met by saying that if God is all-good He cannot be all-powerful, or He would neither endure nor permit the frightful cruelties and wrongs of the world, or if He is

38 *The Ethical and Religious Value of the Drama*

all-powerful He is not all-good. Such alternatives plunge us into those mysteries with which Job struggled and which envelop all our lives. But such mysteries cannot quench "the undying fire" of love in the human heart, rather do they inspire it to deeper devotion and greater strength and purity. And the knowledge that its primal source is not within us, but outside us, fills us with the great hope that, as Rabindranath Tagore says "From Love the world is born, by Love it is sustained and carried on, into deeper Love it enters."

And this has great implications for religion. For how deep and mighty is this Spirit by which we are surrounded! The very comprehension of it, and of our obligations to it, as Mr Wells points out, means a concentration of all our efforts on education and child-nurture, and the culture of the soul and all its powers. It will mean an education in the spirit of Love and all the courtesies of Love—that is, an education in the Spirit of God. It will show how Love has worked in history, and how hatred and all its monstrous and destructive inventions and tortures have worked. It will be, as Mr Wells says, salvation by history and biography, but history taught and read in a new light. "In a world lit and opened by such an education most of these violent dissensions that trouble mankind would be impossible. Instead of men and communities behaving like fever patients in delirium, they would soon be alive to the facts of their common origin, their common offspring and brotherhood, their common destiny. The fire of God—that is, the fire of Love, the undying fire that is in them—would burn more purely and more brightly. Instead of being inspired by the greed of gain, they would be inspired by the spirit of service and of Love." "That," says Job Huss, "is the world which such of us schoolmasters and teachers among us as have the undying fire of God already lit in our hearts do

now labour, generation by generation, against defeat and sometimes against hope, to bring about—that is the present work God has for us And in so far as we do bring it about the prospect opens out before us and before all mankind to inconceivable splendour ”

That is the vision of Isaiah, of Plato, of Jesus, of Dante, of Milton, of Shelley Jesus calls it Love Plato calls it Beauty Dante calls it Light Shelley calls it

“ The awful shadow of some unseen Power,
(which) Floats, though unseen, among us ”

Goethe says

“ I have no name for it—Feeling is all,
Name, sound and smoke,
Dimming the glow of heaven ! ”

Mr Wells calls it “ the undying fire.” It is that miracle of being in all of us “ whirled into life and being by the power of Love,” drawn from myriads of stars and limitless skies and unfathomable forces and countless generations of births and spring-times in the dim morning of the world, to meet and incarnate itself in this wondrous flesh and blood of each one of us, heirs of all the ages as we are That is “ the undying fire ” Who knows where its quenchless flame began ? Who knows where or whither it will end ?

Neither the ancient dramatist nor Mr. Wells solves the problem of undeserved suffering Neither of them answers the ever-present, urgent, and torturing questions which beset the soul of man But who, in this mysterious universe, with our feeble, ant-like knowledge, can answer these questions ? Theological doctrines which profess to explain all the ways of the Eternal are but “ proverbs of ashes,” straw and stones to the soul distraught Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar we may meet every day in the week—they are preaching now from ten thousand

pulpits explaining everything by their "plan of salvation," and thousands of hearts outside are telling them that their preaching and their doctrines are vain. This only we know—that if the Will of Love, the Will of God, is to be done *on earth*, its realisation will mean, not the passive acquiescence and acceptance of calamities and evils, but the active determination that the Will of Love *shall* be done in our daily life in so far as our efforts can promote its realisation. For only in so far as we experience and assimilate that Divine life of Love as it radiates from the greater hearts among men, and only in so far as we, in turn, radiate it from ourselves, do we rise in the scale of spiritual being, and become more effective helpers in the great onward march, moving to the unseen music of the Spirit. And though we may never see the End—that being hidden from us in the mists of Eternity—yet we feel that there is *something* of the End *in the process*, something of the achievement in the struggle. For the rest, let us remember that the greatest minds are mostly silent here. They feel, instinctively, that none can sound the deep mysteries of the Spirit. Always, they seem to say, we must be content with such hints and gleams as the mind of man can discern in the midst of the mighty forces which order "this universal frame," and which conduct us, by the ancient and invisible laws and ways of being, to our mysterious and unknown destiny.

III

THE "PROMETHEUS BOUND" OF ÆSCHYLUS

THE *Prometheus Bound* of Æschylus was probably written about the same time as the drama of Job. There is some uncertainty about the date of Job, but competent critics incline to the opinion that it was written in the fifth century B C—that is, the century in which Æschylus lived and wrote. If that is so, it shows how two of the greatest minds, in very diverse surroundings and civilisations, were pondering these deep mysteries of Life, Suffering, Death, and Eternity, and the ways of God to man. Æschylus, whom some regard as 'one of the greatest, if not the greatest, dramatic poet who ever lived, was born at Eleusis in the year 525 B C. His father is supposed to have been one of the priests of the temple of Demeter. Young Æschylus would therefore soon be initiated in the mysteries of religion. He fought at the famous battle of Marathon in the war against the Persians. He began his career as a dramatist at the age of twenty-five. He is said to have written as many as seventy plays, only seven of which have come down to us. Strange stories are told of the effect of some of his tragedies—women fainting and children dying through fear. But it is necessary to remember that actors often wore rather frightful masks in those days.

Before speaking of the *Prometheus Bound*, let me say a word or two about the Greek drama in general. It is necessary, in judging of any particular form of literature,

42 *The Ethical and Religious Value of the Drama*

to place ourselves, in imagination in so far as we can, in the atmosphere of the time and the attitude of mind of the people for whom such literature was written. To think of the Greek drama or of the Greek theatre as something similar to our modern drama and our modern theatre would be a very great mistake. The Greek drama, especially tragedy, had a deep religious significance. It was often presented in connection with some religious festival, and it dealt frequently with religious themes—Fate, Retribution, Purification, and the after-life. The theatre was open to the sky, and large enough to contain the whole adult population of a city—ten, twenty, or thirty thousand people as the case might be. The stage and scene were of stone, sometimes the front of a palace or the vestibule of a temple. Some of the scenery was movable by machinery. The costumes were as brilliant and graceful as Greek art could make them. Considerably lower than the stage was a huge orchestra, with the altar of Dionysus in the centre. The actors always wore masks, to which some vocal contrivance was attached so that they might make themselves heard throughout the whole of the vast assembly. The opportunity for what we now call character-study was therefore strictly limited. In the early days of dramatic art there was only one actor in a drama, who changed his mask when he wanted to change his part. Æschylus was the first dramatist to introduce two actors. Sophocles, following him, introduced three, and later dramatists four. It is interesting to note that the drama (which, like everything else, is subject to the law of development and evolution) sprang originally out of the dance—not dancing as we know it now, for dancing in which the two sexes were united was then unknown. The individual dance was regarded as a fine art, the fundamental idea of which was the rhythmic physical expression of some inward

feeling "That which poetry effected by words, dancing had to do by movement" ¹ Charles Kingsley called it

"A miracle of art, only possible amongst a people of the free and exquisite physical training and the delicate æsthetic perceptions of those old Greeks, even in their most fallen days. A dance in which every motion was a word, and rest as eloquent as motion, in which every attitude was a fresh motive for a sculptor of the purest school, and the highest physical activity was manifested, not, as in coarse comic pantomimes, in fantastic bounds and unnatural distortions, but in perpetual delicate modulations of a stately and self-sustaining grace" ²

Out of the dance, then, both epic poetry and the drama arose. Æschylus improved upon the gesture and the dance, and taught both the actors and the Chorus how to enforce, by their gestures and their dance movements, the dramatic purpose of each scene.

One word about the Chorus in a Greek play. It was something altogether different from our modern idea of a Chorus. The aim of the drama was to represent a certain action or event at a given time and place. To give unity to *the idea and the event* the play must therefore convey to the audience the impression which that action or event made on those who witnessed it—that is, the spectators of the event. Now the spectators of the event are represented by the Chorus—that is, the Chorus in a Greek play (not the audience) represents the ideal spectator of the action or event represented by the drama. By means of solemn intoned chants, and stately and dignified movements and gestures, it expresses its feelings of joy, surprise, alarm, sorrow, grief, indignation, as the case may be, at what is happening. Especially is it always alert to give the religious impressions of awe, reverence, and solemnity, which might be called forth by any part of the action or event. Anyone who has seen a

¹ Chaucer's

² *Hyperion*, chap. xxii

44 *The Ethical and Religious Value of the Drama*

Greek play performed, even in a modern theatre, cannot fail to realise the profound and solemn impression which these intoned interludes of the Chorus, with their accordant gestures and movements, produce on the audience

Let us now turn to the tragedy of *Prometheus Bound*. It is most unfortunate that this play of Æschylus is the only surviving one of three dealing with the same subject—that is, it is virtually one part of a trilogy. The great Greek plays took the greater part of a whole day for the performance. The spectators took their food with them. The first part of the play was presented in the early morning, the second part at midday, the third part in the afternoon. In this drama of *Prometheus* we have only one part—the others are lost or destroyed. This is unfortunate, because, as we shall see, we do not know how one of the greatest minds of his time worked out the solution of the problem with which the drama deals. It is well to remember also that the ancient Greeks, at the time of which I speak, are reputed to have had at least double the intellectual and artistic capacity of the modern European.

The motive and the plot of the tragedy are of the simplest. The drama is based on the ancient legend of Prometheus, who, against the will of Almighty Zeus, had stolen the sacred fire of knowledge from heaven and carried it down to men on earth. To the savage beings who grubbed holes in the earth like giant ants, or who lay huddled in slimy caverns and tore the beasts around them limb from limb for food—to these he brought the gift of knowledge. He taught them how to cultivate the soil and the beneficent uses of industry and agriculture, the invention of the wheel and how to harness other animals than themselves to their carts, the use of the sail and the rudder, and the white-winged boats that flit across the sea. He taught them also the

meaning of the movements of the rising and the setting stars, the procession of the planets, and the order of the seasons, the healing qualities of plants and herbs, and how to extract the hidden metals from the rocks by which to fashion their tools. Above all, one singularly beautiful gift he gave them—the gift of Hope. But in doing this he had disobeyed the commandments of the Almighty Zeus, who, as a punishment, orders the Titan to be chained to the icy peaks of the Caucasus.

Imagine, then, the scene of the drama. An immense stone stage, in the background appear steep, rugged, icy mountain peaks—cold, bleak, pitiless in their utter loneliness and desolation. At their base the sea dashes its waves. Above them, the cold and silent stars. Upon them, steadily falling snowflakes, driven hither and thither by tempestuous winds. To these mountain peaks, soon after the curtain rises, a huge god-like form is being dragged. It is indeed the Titan, the god Prometheus, in the hands of two other gods named Strength and Force, who have been commanded by Zeus to chain Prometheus to the highest peak in the Caucasian mountains in such a way that he may neither bend the knee nor rest in slumber. Note the grandeur of the scene and compare it with the modern melodrama. Strength and Force are accompanied by Vulcan, the god who presides over the use of iron and metals, and whose business it is to rivet the chains to the rocks. Vulcan does not like his task, and he protests against it to the other gods, Strength and Force.

“Stern powers, your harsh commands have here an end,
Nor find resistance. My less hardy mind,
Averse to violence, shrinks back, and dreads
To bind a kindred god to this wild cliff,
Exposed to every storm, but strong constraint
Compels me, I must steel my soul, and dare
Jove's high commands require a prompt observance.

High-thoughted son of truth-directing Themis,
 Thee with indissoluble chains, perforce,
 Must I now rivet to this savage rock,
 Where neither human voice, nor human form,
 Shall meet thine eye, but parching in the beams,
 Unsheltered, of yon fervid sun, thy bloom
 Shall lose its grace, and make thee wish th' approach
 Of grateful evening mild, whose dusky stole
 Spangled with gems shall veil his fiery heat,
 And night upon the whitening ground breathe froze,
 But soon to melt, touched by his orient ray
 So shall some present ill with varied pain
 Afflict thee, nor is he yet born, whose hand
 Shall set thee free thus thy humanity
 Receives its meed, that thou, a god, regardless
 Of the gods' anger, honouredst mortal man
 With courtesies, which justice not approves
 Therefore the joyless station of this rock
 Unsleeping, unreclining, shalt thou keep,
 And many a groan, many a loud lament
 Throw out in vain, nor move the rig'rous breast
 Of Jove, relentless in his youthful power "x

Strength and Force, however, do not like this sympathy and delay. In harsh tones they condemn Prometheus, and urge Vulcan on to his work in language which reminds us of the incidents of the Crucifixion. Ultimately the task is finished, and, in the parting words, we hear the taunts which were levelled at Jesus on the Cross.

"Now triumph in thy insolence, now steal
 The glory of the gods, and bear the gift
 To mortal man, will they relieve thee now?
 False is the boasted prudence of thy name,
 Or wanted now to free thee from thy fate."

With these words the gods Strength, Force, and Vulcan depart.

All this time Prometheus has not spoken a word.

While his tormentors, the messengers of Zeus, are near
he will not blench nor cry But now that he is alone
he gives voice to his intolerable pain and woe

"Ethereal air, and ye swift-winged winds,
Ye rivers springing from fresh founts, ye waves,
That o'er th' interminable ocean wreath
Your crisped smiles, thou all-producing earth,
And thee, bright sun, I call, whose flaming orb
Views the wide world beneath—see what, a god,
I suffer from the gods, with what fierce pains,
Behold, what tortures for revolving ages
I here must struggle, such unseemly chains
This new-raised ruler of the gods devised
Ah me! That groan bursts from my anguished heart,
My present woes and future to bemoan
When shall these sufferings find their destined end?
But why that vain inquiry? My clear sight
Looks through the future, unforeseen no ill
Shall come on me, behoves me then to bear
Patient my destined fate, knowing how vain
To struggle with necessity's strong power
But to complain, or not complain, alike
Is unavailable For favours shown
To mortal man I bear this weight of woe,
Hid in a hollow cane the fount of fire
I privately conveyed, of every art
Productive, and the noblest gift to men
And for this slight offence, woe, woe is me!
I bear these chains, fixed to this savage rock,
Unsheltered from th' inclemencies of th' air
Ah me! what sound, what softly breathing odour
Steals on my sense? Be you immortal gods,
Or mortal men, or of th' heroic race,
Whoe'er have reached this wild rock's extreme cliff,
Spectators of my woes, or what your purpose,
Ye see me bound, a wretched god, abhorred
By Jove, and every god that treads his courts,
For my fond love of man "

But hark! What is this sound of soft and gentle
music, as of the beating of the air with lightly-moving

48 *The Ethical and Religious Value of the Drama*

wings? It is the Ocean-nymphs, the Chorus, who come to cheer and condole with Prometheus. He is the child of their sister Clymene. They have heard the clanging blows of Vulcan sounding through their ocean caves, and they must needs come to comfort the Titan.

"I see, I see"—they cry (for the Chorus chants as one and uses the singular number)

"I see, I see, and o'er my eyes,
Surcharged with sorrow's tearful rain,
Dark'ning the misty clouds arise,
I see thy adamantine chain,
In its strong grasp thy limbs confined,
And withering in the parching wind
Such the stern power of heaven's new-sceptred lord,
And law-controlling Jove's irrevocable word."

Prometheus tells them that he could have borne his sufferings with fortitude and patience had he been hurled into the deeps of Tartarus, out of sight of men and gods. But to be exposed in mid-air to the taunts, and scorn, and insults of his enemies and fellow-gods is more than he can bear. To which the Chorus responds

"Is there a God, whose sullen soul
Feels a stern joy in thy despair?
Owns he not pity's soft control,
And drops in sympathy the tear?
All, all, save Jove, with fury driven,
Severe he tames the sons of heaven,
And he will tame them, *till some power arise*
To wrest from his strong hand the sceptre of the skies."

That is magnificent. The reader will see how the dramatist is insinuating into the minds of his hearers the truth that an unjust God, or an unjust conception of God, must first be broken down ere a truer and more righteous conception of God can rule in and over human life. So was the power of ancient Yahweh, who was said to command indiscriminate slaughter, of the Dark-age Inflictor of eternal torments, and of the god of

the ages of persecution, broken down The God of Battles will some time go the same way

The Chorus then asks Prometheus why he has been condemned to suffer thus The answer is too long to quote entirely, but its substance is this that Zeus (Jove) and the gods had become jealous of man, and sought to extirpate the whole race—here, again, we are reminded of the legend of Yahweh and the Flood—but he, Prometheus, having pity upon them, alone opposed the will of Zeus

“The lightsome wall
Of finer masonry, the raftered roof
They knew not, but, like ants still buried, delved
Deep in the earth, and scooped their sunless caves
Unmarked the seasons changed, the biting winter,
The flower-perfumed spring, the ripening summer
Fertile of fruits At random all their works,
Till I instructed them to mark the stars,
Their rising, and, a harder science yet,
Their setting The rich train of marshalled numbers
I taught them, and the meet array of letters
T’impress these precepts on their hearts I sent
Memory, the active mother of all wisdom
I taught the patient steer to bear the yoke,
In all his toils joint-labourer with man
By me the harnessed steed was trained to whirl
The rapid car, and grace the pride of wealth
The tall barque, lightly bounding o’er the waves,
I taught its course, and winged its flying sail
I sent blind Hope t’ inhabit in their hearts
With generous zeal I brought them fire from heav’n . .
And all the secret treasures
Deep buried in the bowels of the earth,
Brass, iron, silver, gold, their use to man—
Let the vain tongue make what high vaunts it may—
Are my inventions all, and, in a word,
Prometheus taught each useful art to man ”

The Chorus express their pity and sympathy, and then another god, the ancient god Oceanus, appears upon the scene and tries to persuade Prometheus to moderate his

50 *The Ethical and Religious Value of the Drama*

attitude towards Almighty Zeus, and seek some means of reconciling Justice with omnipotence

“ I wish to counsel thee,
Wise as thou art, to milder measures learn
To know thyself, new model thy behaviour
Cease thy braves,
And meditate the means of thy deliverance
Know'st thou not this, Prometheus, that soft speech
Is to distempered wrath medicinal ? ”

The Chorus, too, add their entreaties—but Prometheus refuses all suggestions of compromise and accommodation
With proud scorn he bids them

“ Go, and with prompt servility fall down
Before your lord, fawn, cringe, and sue for grace
For me, I value him at less than nothing
Let him exert his brief authority,
And lord it whilst he may, his power in Heaven
Shall vanish soon, nor leave a trace behind
Yet shall this Jove, with all his self-willed pride,
Learn humbler thoughts
Of all the gods, not one, myself except,
Can warn him of his fate, and how to shun
Th' impending ruin
Nought shall avail him, nor prevent
His abject and dishonourable fall ”

That is, Prometheus claims to have possession of secret knowledge whereby the power even of Almighty Zeus shall be brought to ruin. Zeus hears of this through his messengers, and sends down the god Mercury to extort this secret from Prometheus under threats of fresh torture To this Prometheus returns, with proud defiance

“ Not all his tortures, all his arts shall move me
T' unlock my lips till this cursed chain be loosed
No, let him hurl his flaming lightnings, wing
His whitening snows, and with his thunders shake
The rocking earth, they move me not to say
What force shall wrest the sceptre from his hand ”

Mercury threatens that lightning and earthquakes shall come to rend the mountains, cover Prometheus in their ruin, and, when he is dragged again to light, the ravening eagle shall feed day by day upon his vitals

Prometheus again replies with magnificent scorn and defiance

"Let him then work his horrid pleasure on me,
Wreath his black curling flames, tempest the air
With volley'd thunders and wild warring winds,
Rend from its roots the firm earth's solid base,
Heave from the roaring main its boisterous waves,
And dash them to the stars, me let him hurl,
Caught in the fiery tempest, to the gloom
Of deepest Tartarus, not all his power
Can quench th' ethereal breath of life in me "

Mercury warns the Chorus to leave him to his doom.
But they reply in solemn chant

"Wouldst thou solicit me to deeds of baseness?
Whate'er betides, with him will I endure it
The vile betrayer I have learned to hate,
There is no fouler stain [than injustice], my soul abhors it "

Mercury departs, and a moment afterwards the mountains reverberate with thunder, the tempestuous billows of the ocean rise, and lightnings flash, and Prometheus disappears below to Tartarus, the abode of condemned souls, in an avalanche of ruin

Here the play, or this, the second or middle part, ends, and we are left wondering what Æschylus would have done with Prometheus and Zeus in the third part—how he would have reconciled apparent injustice with omnipotence, the fundamental problem in theology. The reader will realise on what a magnificent scale the drama is conceived Truly does John Addington Symonds say "Æschylus conceived and executed upon a stupendous scale His outlines are huge, his figures

are colossal. Each of his plays might be compared to a gigantic statue, whereof the several parts, taken separately, are beautiful, while the whole is put together with majestic harmony." Throughout the play the great mind of the dramatist is struggling with this awful problem which besets humanity in all ages—the problem of undeserved suffering. Prometheus, like the suffering Servant of Israel (see Isa. lii and liii) is the representative of suffering humanity, and throughout the whole play we hear the throb and beat of the awful questions: Who shall justify the ways of God to man? Why this apparently undeserved suffering?

There are two interpretations of this legend of Prometheus. One, that of Shelley, which I shall deal with later, presents it as a problem of the development of man. In every age gross and savage conceptions of God, which bring much misery and injustice into human life, have to be broken down, and it is the Promethean and prophetic martyr-spirit of knowledge, righteousness, and good which break them down—break down, that is, the spiritual power of the old gods (idols of the mind) that the new may come to birth. When the Israelites and surrounding tribes were sacrificing their first-born to their savage gods, that conception of God had to be broken down ere the barbarous custom could be abolished, and it was broken down by the teachings of the prophets. When the intolerant persecutors of the Reformation and pre-Reformation times were subjecting heretics to the most cruel tortures, and burning them over slow fires in obedience, as they thought, to the commands of God, that conception also had to be broken down, and a higher conception of Supreme righteousness had to take its place. It was broken down by men like Wyclif, Huss, Luther, Bruno, Servetus, Spinoza, and many others—Promethean men. So, too, when ministers of religion defended chattel slavery from

their Bibles "When the half-gods go, the gods arrive"

The other interpretation of the legend is this—and it is supported by some of the other plays of Æschylus the Greeks always looked upon Almighty Zeus as the embodiment of Eternal Justice Æschylus refers to him in the following terms in one of his plays

"Might of the mighty, King of Kings,
Supremely blest amidst the blest above,
Enthroned in glory, righteous Jove,
From whom perfection to the perfect springs,
Hear us, O hear our fond request,
To pity melt each generous breast

* * * *

"Jove's firm decree, though wrapt in night,
Beams 'midst the gloom a constant light,
Man's fate obscure in darkness lies,
Not to be pierced by mortal eyes,
The just resolves of his high mind
A glorious consummation find

* * * *

"To whom, for justice when I raise the strain,
To whom, save Jove, should I complain?
Great, awful author of our ancient line,
Creative parent, independent lord,
Disposer of the world, righteous, benign,
Sovereign, above the highest high adored,
Whene'er he deigns to grace some favoured head,
Easy alike to him the will, the word, the deed"

The Eternal Justice, then, of which Zeus is the embodiment, is the reconciler of the wrongs of the world. But how can we reconcile the wrongs of Prometheus?—in other words, how can we reconcile the undeserved sufferings of humanity with Supreme Justice? In this way, say the upholders of this particular interpretation Suffering comes from disobedience Tragedy is the outcome of the collision of the human will with the divine

54 *The Ethical and Religious Value of the Drama*

will. Just as Adam suffered for his disobedience to Yahweh by eating of the fruit of the tree of Knowledge and was therefore driven out of Paradise, just as Prometheus suffered on the Caucasian mountains for his disobedience to the Almighty will of Zeus, so all men suffer through disobedience to the Moral Law of God. This disobedience requires a penalty ere Eternal Justice, which ordains that "suffering shall teach," can be satisfied. According to orthodox Christian theology that penalty is freely offered by Christ, who atones for the disobedience of man, and who is himself supposed to be the Son of God, born of a virgin. In the Greek legends it is paid by Hercules, also supposed to be the son of God and born of a virgin. We find these old legends of sacrifice and atonement in various forms and in many religions. Hercules intervenes on behalf of Prometheus. He kills the vultures which gnaw at the vitals of the Titan, touches the heart of Prometheus by his labours on his behalf, and persuades him to relent, to give up his secret knowledge, and to acknowledge the power of Zeus, who has allowed him (Hercules) to mitigate the sufferings of the Titan by killing the vultures. Thus, by concessions on both sides, disobedience and self-will bows down before the Almighty Will of God, and God himself stoops to an act of mercy in allowing His own offspring, Hercules, to bring succour to suffering humanity as represented by Prometheus.

This theory, suggested by John Addington Symonds, seems, from the ethical point of view, to be somewhat weak. Anyhow, the third part of the trilogy is lost, and we shall never know how the great mind of Æschylus treated the problem. The theory is weak in this—first, that it does not touch the problem as to why the sins of the fathers descend upon innocent children, second, that the Eternal Spirit of God does not require any outward sacrifices in order to be reconciled to us—it is

we who need to be reconciled to Him "I desire mercy and not sacrifice" "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit" The divine way is always open, always waiting for us to enter therein When we return, when we say, with Emerson "Virtue, I am thine, save me, use me; thee will I serve day and night, in great, in small, that I may be not virtuous, but virtue—then is the end of creation answered, and God is well pleased" Disobedience to the Moral Law brings suffering, and suffering teaches It leads us into the right path It is the moral or spiritual Law of life, the evolution and development of the soul through limitation and struggle, the Law of the Spirit—purification by experience But how can righteousness, the righteousness of a Jesus, a Job, a Socrates, or a Prometheus, who try to bring to clearer light the beauty of the Moral Law, deserve such agonising suffering? *They don't deserve it* It is the blindness and cruelty of ignorance that inflicts it upon them But who is responsible for that moral blindness? Here we are back again at the old problem—why should the good suffer?

We shall see in future chapters how the great modern poets and dramatists struggled with the problem.

IV

THE MYSTERY AND MORALITY PLAYS OF THE MIDDLE AGES PIETER DIESTENSIS' "EVERYMAN"

FROM Judæa and the drama of Job, and from Athens and the ancient Greek drama, to the mystery plays of the later Middle Ages is a great leap. But the same truth, on which I have before insisted, appears here also—that the drama, in every age, is influenced and largely conditioned by the religious beliefs and atmosphere of the time. In the Middle Ages we enter, of course, into a wholly new world—in some respects an immature world, an immature civilisation. The mind of man seemed dwarfed to what we should now regard as childish conceptions of the universe—the earth as the centre of the universe, man the central being on the earth, for whose benefit sun, moon, and stars were created and pursued their ordered way. Above the earth was Heaven, the abode of the blessed, to which Christ had ascended, below the earth was the abode of the damned, where Satan reigned. Yet the world of Earth and Nature was but a vain and passing shadow—the soul of man was destined for the eternal realms. The old questions, whether in Judæa, Athens, the little country towns of Europe in the Middle Ages, or in our modern scientific age, repeat themselves with ever-pressing insistence. Whence did I come? How am I related to the past, to the future, to the wonderful life of the Spirit which surrounds me? What is the meaning of Death and Eternity? Whither shall I go when I die?

Hence the interest of the drama of life, whether in cultured Athens, the tiny world of the Middle Ages, or the larger world of to-day, lies in the struggle of man with himself and with his surroundings—the struggle against ignorance, sin, and evil, the punishment of the wicked, the purification of the erring, the reward of the just. These were the questions—religious questions—with which the mystery plays of the Middle Ages dealt. Simple as those mystery plays were, they form a sort of link between the ancient and the modern drama. As John Addington Symonds points out “The representation of the *Mysteries* during the Middle Ages kept alive the dramatic tradition, until the discovery of classic literature and the revival of taste in modern Europe led to the great works of the English, Spanish, French, and German theatre”¹. They illustrate once again, also, the union of drama and religion.

These Mystery plays, Morality plays, and Passion plays were very popular. They often took a day, sometimes two or three days, to perform. The country people came to them as to a holiday. They were presented in very crude fashion, sometimes in the market-place or on the village green, sometimes in the church itself. Choruses, songs, quaint and homely dialogue, characters representing angels, demons, wild beasts, and the Devil himself, formed part of the drama. The subject-matter of the drama usually revolved around the great Biblical legends and events—the Creation, the supposed Fall of Man, the Exodus, the wanderings of the Israelites, the giving of the Law from Mount Sinai, the birth of Jesus; the visit of the Shepherds and the Magi, the Last Supper, the Crucifixion, the Resurrection, and the Ascension. The dramatic representation was of the most primitive type, yet it was often carried out on a large scale, with much pageantry, and in a very realistic way.

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Nicodemus, Mary and John, and servants with ointments. Watchers are appointed to guard the tomb, but they fall asleep, and angels greet the Christ as he arises. Then follows an incident which has dropped out of the modern Christian story—the descent of Jesus into Hades and the liberation of the souls of the good. Then follow the earthly appearances of Jesus to the disciples, the Ascension, and the death and Assumption of the mother of Jesus. Then, with the hymn “Christ is risen,” in which the spectators joined, the three days’ drama was brought to a close.¹

It is from such Mystery plays as these that the Ober-Amergau Passion-play has survived down to our own day, and they show how deeply the drama is influenced by religious ideas and feelings.

But there is another Morality play which has come down to our own times, and which is more in accordance with our modern ideas because it is of universal application. It is the play called *Everyman*. It is supposed to have been written by a Hollander named Pieter Diestensis, who lived in the latter half of the fifteenth century. When the play was revived some years ago it made a profound impression on all who saw it, the reason for this being that it appeals simply, but effectively, to the deep and universal instincts and feelings in human nature, and deals with a situation which, one day, must come to all of us. The play is said to be based on a Buddhist parable which runs as follows. A certain man had three friends. Being called before the king to answer for a heavy debt, he naturally went to these friends for assistance. Two of them, although he held them in high esteem, made profuse apologies and excuses, and declined to assist him, but the third, to whom he had given little thought, went with him.

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to the judgment-seat and pleaded on his behalf The first friend, says the parable, was his property, his worldly wealth, the second was his worldly companions, even his own kith and kin, the third was the sum of his own good works and deeds—faith, hope, charity, human kindness, and love The things outside us, the things on which we are apt to lay most store—our wealth, our outward honours, our boon companions—depart from us, they are not part of ourselves But the things to which we too often give little thought—

“That best portion of a good man’s life,
His little, nameless, unremembered acts
Of kindness and of love”—

these are things that become an eternal spiritual possession, part of our very selves, “lines written on our souls”

This is the thought on which this little play is based Let me try to give a brief description of it

The action of the play begins, partly after the manner of Job and *Faust*, with the reflections of God on the moral condition of the world and the general state of mankind He sees men living on earth with no thought but of their own pleasure and worldly advancement, no thought of the end that awaits them They live in a vain show Therefore He will send His messenger, Death, to awake them to a sense of the realities of things and to demand a reckoning of Everyman’s life

“I perceive here in My majesty
How that all creatures be to Me unkind,
Living without dread in worldly prosperity
Of ghostly sight the people be so blind,
Drowned in sin, they know Me not for God,
In worldly riches is all their mind,
They fear not My righteousness, that sharp rod

* * * *

That needs on them I must do justice,
On Everyman, living without fear
Where art thou, Death, thou mighty messenger ? ”

60 *The Ethical and Religious Value of the Drama*

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“I perceive here in My majesty
How that all creatures be to Me unkind,
Living without dread in worldly prosperity
Of ghostly sight the people be so blind,
Drowned in sin, they know Me not for God,
In worldly riches is all their mind,
They fear not My righteousness, that sharp rod

* * * * *

That needs on them I must do justice,
On Everyman, living without fear
Where art thou, Death, thou mighty messenger ? ”

Death appears and receives his instructions

“Go thou to Everyman,
And shew him in My name
A pilgrimage he must on him take,
Which he in no wise may escape,
And that he brynge with hym a sure reckoning
Without delay or any tarrying ”

And Death replies

“Lord, I will in the world go run over all,
And truly out-search both great and small,
Every man will I beset that liveth beastly,
Out of God’s laws, and dreadeth not folly ”

So Death goes, and as he turns to carry out his task, lo! Everyman saunters on the stage. He is a joyous youth, gaily clad, a harp over his shoulder, and his heart and countenance full of smiles and pleasure. As Death accosts him our heart sinks within us—we see our own fate.

“Everyman, stand still, whither art thou going
Thus gaily? Hast thou thy Maker forgotten?”

Everyman draws back in fear “Why asketh thou?”
“Because,” says Death

“In great haste I am sent to thee
From God out of His majesty’
‘What, sent to me?’
‘Yea, certainly,
Though thou have forgotten Him here,
He thinketh on thee in the heavenly sphere
A reckoning He will needs have
Without any longer respite
And look thou be sure of thy reckoning
For before God thou shalt answer, and shew
Thy many bad deeds and thy good but a few,
How thou hast sped thy life, and in what wise,
Before the chief Lord of Paradise’ ”

Everyman, now full of anxiety and fear, pleads for time. He will give much wealth—yea, a thousand pounds—if Death will but defer the matter till another day. But Death replies

“Everyman, it may not be by no waye,
I set not by gold, sylver, nor rychesse,
Ne by pope, emperour, kyng, duke, ne prynces;
For, and I wolde receyve gyftes grete,
All the worlde I myght gete,
But my custome is clene contrary,
I gyve the no respyte, come hens and not tary.”

And so, in spite of Everyman's piteous pleadings, in spite of his protestations that “all unready is his book of reckoning,” Death is inexorable.

“Thee availeth not to cry, weep, and pray.”

Only one thing will he grant—that is, that Everyman shall have a little time to see his friends, to ascertain whether any one of them will bear him company on his great journey. Here is a little light in the gloom. His thoughts turn first to his greatest friend and born companion, Fellowship.

“What, and I to Felawshype thereof spake,
And shewed hym of this sodeyne chaunce!
For in hym is all myne affyaunce,
We have in the worlde so many a daye
Be good frendes in sporte and playe
I see hym yonder certaynely,
I trust that he wyll bere me company,
Therefore to hym wyll I speke to ese my sorrowe
Well mette, good Felawshype, and Good morrowe.”

Fellowship returns the greeting and inquires the reason of his friend's downcast looks, and when he hears that Everyman must go on a long journey he volunteers, lightly and merrily, to go with his old friend, Everyman, wherever he pleases. He will not hear of thanks.

“ Shew me your grief and say no more
 For in faith, and thou go to hell,
 I will not forsake thee by the way ”

But as soon as Fellowship hears the real state of the case and what is required of him, he draws back, temporises, and ultimately refuses outright. He will do anything on this earth for Everyman—he will eat, and drink, and make good cheer—but the journey to Eternity—no

“ For no man that is living to-day
 I will not go that loth journeye,
 Not for the father that bygate me,”

and he takes himself off to more cheerful company

Then Everyman goes to other friends, to his cousin and his kindred, but they, too, are full of excuses, and refuse to go with him. Then he turns to his friend Wealth, whom he has loved all his life and who has done great things for him. But when the situation is explained to Wealth he, too, declines

“ Nay, Everyman, I sing another song
 I follow no man in such voyages
 What, weenest thou that I am thine ? ’
 ‘ I had wend so,’ replies Everyman
 ‘ Nay, Everyman,’ says Wealth, ‘ I say no ,
 As for a while I was lent thee,
 A season thou hast had me in prosperity ,
 My condition is man’s soul to kill ,
 If I save one, a thousand I do spill
 Weenest thou that I will follow thee
 From this world ? ’ Nay, verily ’
 ‘ I had wend otherwise,’ says Everyman
 ‘ Therefore to thy soul wealth is a thief ,
 For when thou art dead this is my guise—
 Another to deceive in the same wise
 As I have done thee, and all to his soul’s reprimand ’
 ‘ O false Good,’ says Everyman,
 ‘ Cursed thou be !
 Thou traitor to God, thou hast deceived me,
 And caught me in thy snare ’ ”

All his worldly friends failing him, Everyman bethinks himself of one other friend whom he has much neglected—his friend, Good Deeds. And now Good Deeds appears on the stage in the form of a maiden. But alas! she is so weak and prostrate through long neglect, and Everyman's many sins have so sorely wounded her, that she can hardly walk. But even so she will aid him and give him counsel. She has a sister called Knowledge, who will be a guide to him. And Knowledge appears—"a stately crowned figure," says Mr W. M. Salter in his description of the play, "who represents the light of religion, the light of the mind, the light that is equal to man's sorest emergencies, so he be ready to follow it

" 'Everyman, I will go with the and be thy gyde,
In thy moost nede to go by thy side' "

"And now the darkness begins to break for the unhappy man. Slowly, half-reluctantly, willing with his mind and better nature, but with all too natural shrinkings and hesitations of the flesh, he allows himself to be led by Knowledge to that holy man, 'that cleansynge ryvere,' Confession. He humbles himself, takes the rod of penance in his hands—typifying the sublime thought that he who punishes himself, God need not punish, he takes off his bright garments and puts on sack-cloth, he scourges himself—and in his very humiliation a strange sweet joy steals over him, a trembling confidence awakens in his breast. Most wonderful of all, when he presently sees Good Deeds, she is restored, somehow the secret of life, and health, and soundness has been poured into her by his self-abasement and assertion of moral will. She exclaims

" 'Ye have me made hole and sounde,
Therfor I wyll byde by the in every stounde' "

Then comes the ending of the play—an ending which

66 *The Ethical and Religious Value of the Drama*

holds the mirror up to Nature indeed. It is well that Knowledge should go with Everyman to the end, well that he should keep to the last the dignity of consciousness. And Knowledge advises him also to summon Discretion, and Strength, and Beauty, and his Five Wits, to nerve him for the last hour. These do come to him for a space, and then occurs the finest touch in the whole play. For even Knowledge, and Discretion, and Strength, and Beauty cannot go with us into the grave. Strength goes. The beauty of the flesh departs. Discretion and the Five Wits sink into torpor. And Knowledge, keeping to the last the central citadel of life, watches them depart with a kind of terror. So it is with Everyman. As he moves towards the open grave a faintness comes over him, and he cries in vain, "Sweet Strength, tarry a little space." It is of no avail. All the radiant figures of his youth and life forsake him one by one. Even Knowledge, though it goes with him to the edge of the grave, withdraws from him there and leaves him—not alone! For there is one that will not leave him, that goes with him into the grave, into the dominion of Death itself—it is the maiden Good Deeds. With heavenly sweetness and faithfulness she goes down into the dark tomb with him, to remain with him for ever. For she is part of himself, more than friend, more than kindred, more than Wealth, more than Knowledge—she is his better self, who will never forsake him unless he himself, in his blindness, shall put her away from him.

That is the most beautiful scene in the whole play—it is so true to Nature and to what we believe to be behind Nature. Strength, Beauty, Wits, Knowledge—all these will depart from us. They belong to the things that fleet and pass. Even our knowledge, and our intellectual cleverness, and our artistic ability—what are these things but the content and instruments of the five senses which fade away with our corporeal self? Of what avail will

they be when the senses on which they are built are gone ?—

“ And, like the baseless fabric of this vision,
The cloud-capped towers, the gorgeous palaces,
The solemn temples, the great globe itself—
Yea, all which it inherit—shall dissolve,
And, like this insubstantial pageant faded,
Leave not a rack behind ! ”

But our Deeds—the things which go to make our real self, the things which have wrought themselves into the very structure of our life—these cannot depart from us. They have made us what we are. They have composed and built up our nature. They, and the thoughts and feelings of which they are the outcome, are the stuff of which our spiritual being is wrought. All else—Knowledge, Wealth, place and pride of possession or position—these are the mere instruments of the soul. But the self, the personality, all that is made by action and by habit, by the life we are living daily in the home, in the workshop, the school, the factory, and the counting-house, the steady, ceaseless, shaping influence of our daily occupations, the secret thoughts which, trembling on the verge of action, are slowly transformed into deeds—the sum of these things can never depart from us. Deeds can never be undone. They can only be washed with tears of penitence, which may perchance prepare the soul for purer raiment. No wonder that, as *Everyman* descends into the grave with the maiden Good Deeds beside him, we hear the distant chanting as of angels on some gradually approaching shore, waiting to hear the reckoning, and to register in the Book of Life the judgment which the soul has brought upon itself.

One hardly needs to add anything in the way of comment to this old Morality play. It gives rise to a multitude of thoughts and speculations which take us into that region of mystery which surrounds our life.

68 *The Ethical and Religious Value of the Drama*

Sin, defects of Will, hereditary endowment or capacity for good or for evil, the limitations, the half-blindness, which surround our idea or vision of the good, the "light within" that is so feeble sometimes that it seems but darkness, the meaning of temptation, the deep problems of Life, of Consciousness, of Eternity, of God—all these things crowd upon the mind as we read or see this old Morality. The answer it gives to them—which is the answer of the Roman Catholic Church—is not the answer which we give to-day. And yet so universal are the common feelings and emotions of which human nature is wrought that there is a point where even Catholic and Protestant can meet in harmony—the point that Goodness, Good Deeds, are essential to inward peace and the eternal welfare of the soul. The cosmogony of the mediæval Catholic Church has gone, and gone for ever Hell, Purgatory, and Heaven, as places of which the priesthood and the Church hold the keys, no longer exist for us. But, as spiritual conditions—Hell as the realm of selfishness, cruelty, hatred, and violence into which our own deeds may lead our souls, the spiritual stairway of Purgatorial penance, and discipline, and purification, and the Life of the Blessed, where the creative spirit of Truth, Beauty, and Love reaches its highest activity—these are spiritual conceptions which Dante has limned for us in immortal verse, and which are of the essence of spiritual life.

What will come in the after-life to the erring soul of Everyman is a question on which I prefer the answer of Jesus to that of the creeds of the Churches—the answer, virtually, that the eternal laws of God can never be broken without pain and suffering, that they are hard and unbending to those who defy them, but full of pity and mercy and healing to those who strive to obey their commands, keeping their gates always open for the return of those who wander from their ways.

As the father in the parable says to the elder son "Son, thou art ever with me, and all that is mine is thine But this, thy brother, was dead and is alive again, he was lost, and is found It is meet, therefore, that we should make merry and be glad" Yes, penitence, purification, the will to Good—these are the gateways of the Spirit

The value of *Everyman*, however, lies not in its portrayal of the evils of sin, but in its insistence upon the supreme importance of life and the use we make of it It virtually says to each one of us "To-morrow, or the next day, your time will come The great Messenger will visit you Is your reckoning ready? Can you say, with the quietness and calmness of the sorely troubled Hamlet "If it be now, 'tis not to come, if it be not to come it will be now, if it be not now, yet it will come—the readiness is all"? In that hour, when we shall have to make the great pass alone, with no human companions, there will be but one stay on which we can rely—the good within, wrought out of past deeds, seeking its Parent-good without Then, when our summons comes, and we descend into the valley of Peace, and awake, perchance, amid other scenes, we shall know, by our experiences *here*, how to do our part *there*, as the morning of Eternity dawns upon our startled souls.

V

SHAKESPEARE'S "KING LEAR" AND THE PROBLEM OF DIVINE JUSTICE

WE have seen how one of the greatest ancient Hebrew writers, one of the greatest of the Greek dramatists, and the best Catholic philosophy of the Middle Ages expressing itself in drama, dealt with this central problem of the ways of God to man, and particularly with the problem of undeserved suffering. In Shakespeare's *King Lear*, which Swinburne calls "the most terrible work of human genius," we see another great mind, with all the added advantage of two thousand years of intervening development and civilisation behind it, struggling with the same problem. We shall see that Shakespeare, like the earlier writers, is baffled by the problem, but that he, too, gives us hints and gleams of divine truth which help to guide us on our way.

The play of *Lear* has been compared to a Gothic cathedral, with its minarets and spires, its heavy gloom and tinted lights, its mysterious depths of groined roof, and dim perspective of long-drawn aisles and fretted vaults. The description belongs to the romantic age of criticism. Tolstoi, going to the other extreme, makes short work of it, and declares that *King Lear* is a "bad, carelessly composed production," which evokes "aversion and weariness." These are the extremes of appreciation and criticism. The play is a great play, but it has its

defects It opens with what has always seemed to me a very weak scene, in which the strong-willed and imperious king disinherits his daughter Cordelia, merely because she is not sufficiently fulsome and effusive in the expressions of her love for him. That is weak and unnatural, and the punishment he visits upon Cordelia is unnatural We are told that Lear is a great king, but here he shows the little-mindedness of a self-willed child However, I need not describe the play in detail—it is sufficiently well known, and I must confine myself to those parts of it which illustrate the main theme—the problem of undeserved suffering and its reconciliation with the rule of Divine Justice in the world

The unjust distribution of power which follows on the ill-tempered disinheriting of Cordelia leads to terrible consequences Now that he has divested himself of the burdens and offices of kingship, Lear decides to spend the declining years of his life with his two elder daughters, Goneril and Regan, in turn He goes first to the house of Goneril, who receives him with such ill grace and scant courtesy that he inquires in dismay and rising passion

"Are you our daughter? Doth any here know me?"—passion which simply boils over when Goneril coolly desires him to disquantity his retinue, or else she will enforce the thing she begs He leaves her with the remark

"How sharper than a serpent's tooth it is
To have a thankless child!"

He proceeds to the house of his second daughter, Regan But Regan is evidently in conspiracy with her sister Goneril against her father, and receives him with less than courtesy She puts his messenger in the stocks, lectures her father on his indiscretion, and bids him, "being weak, to seem so." Lear, it must be remembered,

is over eighty years of age. No wonder that his mind is unhinged by this unnatural conduct. When he leaves his unfilial daughters, now with no roof to shelter his head, a furious storm breaks out, and in that storm his madness comes upon him. Wave after wave of passion does it work, and the convulsions of Nature—the rolling thunder, the blinding lightning, the devastating whirlwind—form a fitting background and symbol of the convulsions in Lear's mind. Charles Lamb says this scene cannot be acted, the explosions of the passions are too terrible. But the imperious and self-willed king is subjugated into penitence. His unwonted and wretched experiences—homeless and supperless—bring home to him what, indeed, it is a pity cannot be more vividly brought home to all of us—the embittering and degrading effects of poverty.

“Poor naked wretches, wheresoe’er you are,
That bide the pelting of this pitiless storm,
How shall your houseless heads and unfed sides,
Your loop’d and window’d raggedness defend you
From seasons such as these? O, I have ta’en
Too little care of this! Take physic, pomp,
Expose thyself to feel what wretches feel,
That thou mayst shake the superflux to them,
And show the heavens more just.”

But there is an underplot in *Lear* which is intermingled with the main plot, and which brings out still more clearly the terrible nature of the problem of evil. Edmund, son of the Earl of Gloster—a sort of spiritual brother of Iago, and a fit companion of Goneril and Regan—enters into an intrigue with them both, separately, and deluding both, in order to gain supreme control of the kingdom. Kent, the faithful minister of Lear, seeing how matters stand, sends to France for the banished Cordelia to come to the aid of her homeless father. Cordelia arrives at Dover with an army from

France, and comes upon her father while he is asleep in his tent, attended by a physician. By her gentle tendance she brings the old king out of the night of madness, but his mind still wanders. As he wakes to consciousness he believes himself to be dead.

"You do me wrong to take me out o' the grave
Thou [to Cordelia] art a soul in bliss, but I am bound
Upon a wheel of fire, that mine own tears
Do scald like molten lead
I fear I am not in my perfect mind
Methinks I should know you
Yet I am doubtful, for I am mainly ignorant
What place this is

Do not laugh at me,
For, as I am a man, I think this lady
To be my child Cordelia"

Cordelia, on her part, asks his blessing, will not hear of any need for forgiveness, and so fills his heart with remorse and shame.

Meanwhile, the forces of the villains Edmund, Regan, and Goneril advance against those of Lear and Cordelia. The latter are defeated, and the old king and his daughter are taken prisoners. But in the very hour of victory the powers of darkness work mischief amongst themselves. Regan is poisoned by her jealous sister, Edmund is mortally wounded in combat with Edgar, his brother and rightful heir, and Goneril, her guilty intrigue discovered, puts an end to her own life. But evil, as evil always does, involves the innocent in the ruin which it brings. Edmund, when taking Lear and Cordelia prisoners, gives orders that Cordelia must be hanged in order to prevent her accession to the throne. This is done, but Lear slays the hangman, and escapes with the body of his dead daughter in his arms. On such sacrifices, as Lear says, "the gods themselves throw incense." But he cannot believe that she is dead. He

holds a feather to her lips to see if, perchance, she breathes

“ This feather stirs , she lives ! if it be so,
It is a chance which does redeem all sorrows
That ever I have felt
Cordelia, Cordelia ! Stay a little Ha !
What is't thou say'st ? Her voice was ever soft,
Gentle, and low, an excellent thing in woman ”

But as the truth forces itself upon him the stricken heart breathes its last As he passes to his eternal rest we involuntarily echo the words of the faithful Kent .

“ Vex not his ghost O, let him pass ! he hates him
That would upon the rack of this tough world
Stretch him out longer,”

and the play ends

Here, then, in the drama of *Lear* we have much the same problem as that which the authors of *Job* and of *Prometheus Bound* bring before us Where is Divine Justice, Divine Providence ? The good and the wicked go down into the grave together—nay, the good with more cruel tortures than the wicked Lear himself, the gentle Cordelia, the aged Earl of Gloster—all disappear in the passion and ruin which evil creates What, then, is Shakespeare's answer to the question Where is Divine Justice ? In this play there is no answer Shakespeare, like the author of *Job*, can give us only hints and gleams It is not without significance that he makes several of the characters *attempt* an answer. One after the other, as he views the terrible events which are taking place, one character after another is evidently preoccupied with the question—What is the ultimate Power which governs all ? Are we the masters of our fate ? Or do the gods, or Fate, or some malvolent power drive us on to madness and death ? The

faithful Kent, for example, gives up the problem, and says

"It is the stars,
The stars above us govern our conditions"

That is sheer fatalism. On the other hand, the Earl of Gloster goes to the extreme of pessimism

"As flies to wanton boys are we to the gods
They kill us for their sport"

That, I say, is black and unrelieved pessimism—but we must remember that Gloster has had his eyes put out by Regan and her husband. Lear himself accuses the unseen powers of injustice, while the Duke of Albany gives utterance to commonplace optimism when he says

"All friends shall taste
The wages of their virtue, and all foes
The cup of their deservings"—

which is untrue, for Cordelia does *not* taste "the wages of her virtue"

Shakespeare himself, in this play, seems to lean to the pessimistic view, for the moment after Albany exclaims "The gods defend her"—referring to the danger in which Cordelia stands when he learns that she is in the power of Edmund—the moment after that invocation to the gods, Lear comes on to the stage with the dead body of Cordelia in his arms. That is the way, Shakespeare seems to say—that is the way the gods defend us! While towards the end of the play he makes Lear exclaim "No, no, no life" "The fatalism of the play," says Swinburne, "is of a harder and darker nature than that of the Greek dramatists"

A higher note, however, is struck by Gloster when he says, speaking of Goneril and Regan

"I shall see the winged messengers overtake such children",

76 *The Ethical and Religious Value of the Drama*
and by Edgar when he says

“The gods are just, and of our pleasant vices
Make instruments to scourge us”

It is in this saying of Edgar's that we get an indication of such light on the problem as the play affords. Let us therefore pursue this line a little

The tragedy of Lear is really a study in one of the commonest forms of evil—a form which, more or less, afflicts all of us—that is, passionate self-will, which is always blind. Shakespeare shows us that the moment this comes uppermost sanity and self-control are displaced, and chaos reigns, not only in our own lives, but—in so far as this blind egoism extends—in the State and in the world around us. For not only is wise judgment dethroned, but there is no trust, no reciprocity of affection or obligation between men, and the bonds which hold society together are snapped asunder. Regan, Goneril, Edmund, Cornwall, even Lear himself in the early part of the drama, are an exemplification of rebellion and war in the moral world—rebellion against moral and spiritual law, bringing as dire results as the escape of the planets from their appointed orbits would bring into the physical world. And so the play has been spoken of as “a supreme vindication of the independent supremacy of the Moral Law.” That is partly true, but its truth is only partial. For I can see no “supreme vindication of the independent supremacy of the Moral Law” in the torture of Gloster, the hanging of Cordelia, and the heart-broken death of Lear. It is true, indeed, that the spiritual laws of the universe do work in that way—that is, rebellion against these laws always bring suffering upon the innocent. Therefore, say some, there is no God—there is no such thing as Divine Justice in the universe. The great and upright patriarch Job suffers while the wicked prosper; Christ

is scorned, derided, and crucified on Calvary, Socrates is condemned by reputedly wise judges and dies in a prison cell, Huss, Servetus, Bruno, and Joan of Arc are burnt at the stake, Cordelia is hanged by the villain Edmund. Where, then, is Divine Justice?

The Theosophists answer that by introducing the Eastern doctrine of Karma—that is, they say that every soul has lived in some previous life or incarnation, and that any suffering which is inflicted upon it here is simply the purifying penalty of previous misdeeds in a former life. They adopt the complacent optimism of Albany when he says that all “shall taste the cup of their deservings.” That doctrine seems to me to fail at two points. First, it lands us in a huge machine-like fatalism. Caiaphas, the judges of Socrates, the executioners of John Huss, Servetus, Bruno, and Joan, Edmund, the slayer of Cordelia—all these, instead of being the blind or villainous characters we had supposed them to be, become the “instruments of God” to give to others “the cup of their deservings.” Extend that theory to all the atrocities of history—to the Great War, for example—and we are asked to believe that all the single-minded, brave, and self-sacrificing men who died inconceivably cruel deaths on the plains of Flanders, the hills of Gallipoli, the steppes of Russia and Poland, and in the swamps of Mesopotamia, simply received “the cup of their deservings” for wrongs they had done in some previous incarnation, and that the real authors and instigators of the war—the assassins of Serajevo, the German and Austrian militarists, or the Russian and French militarists and diplomatists, whichever view the reader takes—were simply the instruments of Divine Justice to bring due punishment to erring man. That, I say, is sheer fatalism.

Second, the theory fails in this—that there can be no justice in punishment where memory, or the sense

78 *The Ethical and Religious Value of the Drama*

of identity, is taken away If I lose my sense of identity I become, in a moral sense, a different being, and any penalties which are inflicted upon me bear no rational relation to my present self, to my blotted-out experiences, or to my understanding That is unjust

No, as we shall see later, the only light we can get on this dark problem is in the theory that all Life is one, that "we are members one of another", that "no man liveth to himself and no man dieth to himself"; and that ignorance, evil, wrong, and disharmony bring their unhappy and painful effects, in varying measure, upon all Not even the Supreme Spirit Himself, apparently, can abrogate the working of these spiritual laws They are of and in the structure of the universe Obviously there cannot be Divine Justice in *this* world, else why should we pray, "Thy kingdom come," or work for that kingdom? If the kingdom of Divine Justice had already come and each had got "the cup of his deservings" we need not pray or work for it The fact that we do pray and work for it shows that it is not yet realised here But that we *do* pray and work for it shows that we believe that the spiritual laws and conditions for realising it *are* already here, if we will only observe and obey them and use them for that great purpose. Thus, for example, though the good suffer, evil is always, ultimately, brought to naught It dies, or, while it lives and seems to thrive, the seeds of decay are already within it Give it its own way, and it ends in becoming a frightful monster like Edmund or Iago, while the spirit of the good—the influence of a Christ or a Cordelia—lives on, and grows to more and more in the life of humanity Evil repels and affrights us—that is, it is destructive in its effects, while good, real good which never vaunts itself, attracts and charms us—that is, it is creative and constructive in its effect upon us Surely that is a divine, spiritual law, showing that God (Spirit) exists—a law which prevails

in every part of the spiritual universe, not only in our own lives and homes, but which presides over the destinies of nations and civilisations. The individual falls, and is apparently sacrificed, but the spiritual influence of his life goes sounding on for good. And who knows but that, seeing that we know so little here, looking "as through a glass darkly," who knows but that, in that vaster spiritual world of which our lives are a part, the Christs and the Cordelias live on in continued creativeness of spiritual influence and power, while the Edmunds and the Iagos see themselves in all their frightfulness, and, *seeing*, are slowly purified, and turn in shame and penitence to the better way? These spiritual laws are like the life-giving warmth and radiance of the sun which shines upon the just and the unjust alike, so, too, this spiritual effluence, while bestowing its life-giving power, is always saying to us "Use My spiritual power and radiant influence for good, and I will bless your life and make it fruitful, use it for evil, and I will bring all your labour and your work to naught."

Now the working of these spiritual laws is so secret, so invisible, so interpenetrative of all our life—binding us all together, good and evil alike, in indissoluble bonds—that we do not perceive or realise the ways and conditions under which they operate. Two of the most important of these conditions are these first, that suffering often teaches and purifies, just as Lear was purified of unjust passion, second, that only by the spiritual or psychological reactions induced by given words, deeds, and personalities is the good spirit preserved, strengthened, and enabled to become more creative in the world of human life—that is, the love and self-sacrifice of a Christ reacts on his disciples and followers, and, through them, upon humanity. The love and sacrifice of a Cordelia brings spiritual insight to Lear and his followers, and to all who witness or read the

80 *The Ethical and Religious Value of the Drama*

drama In this sense the drama has been called a drama of redemption By the death of Cordelia, Shakespeare shows us that it is better to suffer and die in a holy cause than to live in comfort and ease with the selfish and the cruel It was better for Cordelia to come home from France to her father at the risk of death than to live a selfish and cold-hearted queen Love—which is the spirit of God—Love in this world must always be prepared to offer itself as a sacrifice We have to try to save each other—in other words, to help each other onward in our spiritual development by mutual service and frequent sacrifice in accordance with spiritual law.

“Thou wouldst not *alone*
Be saved, my father! alone
Conquer and come to thy goal”

By this law the world is moved onward and upward. Why the sacrifice, and the cruelties attending the sacrifice, should be necessary we do not know

With all his pessimism Shakespeare shows himself, even in this sombre play, on the side of the eternal verities The whole play, in which right and wrong, as Professor Bradley has said, are tossed about as mere counters, ends in confounding the ways of Evil, and shows that it is contrary to the real and eternal nature of things. We might well take to heart that sentence of Balzac's “How the social villainies of this world would thrive under our laws if there were no God!”—that is, if there were no spiritual principle in the universe, and if injustice brought the inner happiness or inward peace which justice brings. The Supreme Spirit does slowly bring evil to naught, while the good, though it suffers and often *seems* to perish, ever grows to more and more

As for ultimate issues, let us never be afraid to admit that here we are surrounded by mystery—that we want fuller revelations, that our finite vision cannot tell us

all. The tragedy of *Lear*, cast in a dark and barbarous age, is enveloped in this profound darkness. But even in this play the darkness is relieved by the courage and faithfulness of a Kent, by the manliness of Gloster and Edgar and Albany, and by the fidelity to truth, the sense of duty, and the depth of understanding love of a Cordelia. It is these qualities which are the spiritual rays of light which pierce the gloom, the sacrifices on which "the gods themselves throw incense," the guiding threads to which we "tie the soul." They are the light of our world, sweetening its sorrows and consecrating its joys, giving strength to duty, and inspiration to the silent and unknown heroisms of our daily life. They are the sacrifices which Love makes on the altar of the world to atone for the erring sins and passions of ourselves and our fellows, and to light us on our darksome way. As for the rest—"the Eternal seeth not as man seeth, for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Eternal looketh on the heart."

VI

GOETHE'S "FAUST" AND THE SPIRITUAL EVOLUTION OF THE SOUL

GOETHE'S *Faust*, from the point of view of religion, is an excellent introduction to the modern drama. It shifts the emphasis from the idea of the transcendence of God, by which the ancient drama was dominated, to the modern idea of the immanence of God—an idea which has been immensely strengthened by the theory of evolution and by the poets, dramatists, and philosophers of the nineteenth century. This change of emphasis has increased the significance, the importance, and, for us, the value of personality both in life and in the drama, for it is by and through personality that the Spirit works.

In external features there are one or two points of similarity between the drama of Job and the drama of *Faust*. Like the author of Job, Goethe lays the first scene of his drama in Heaven, and he begins it also with a compact made between God and the Devil—a compact by which the latter shall have free course to tempt a man from his highest self, to win him from his allegiance to the Good, and induce him to sell his soul to the powers of Evil. But while the drama of Job centres in the problem, "Why should the good suffer?" or "Why should there be so much apparent injustice in the world?" the drama of *Faust* revolves around

two other problems first, What is the secret of Life, Death, and Nature? And as the answer virtually comes, "We shall never know that secret here," Faust, prompted and tempted by Mephistopheles, concludes—"then let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die." That is to put Knowledge, Power, Pleasure, above all things Faust virtually sells his soul to the spirit of Evil, and only through remorse, purification, and the love of Marguerite ultimately attains salvation. Hence the second and supreme problem is—Is experience of sin *necessary* to give the spiritual insight which brings purification and the attainment of self-realisation? It is in the treatment of these two problems—the metaphysical problem and the ethical one, the problem of Being and the problem of self-realisation—that the drama touches and quickens the ever-recurrent questionings of the human mind. It holds the mirror up to our human nature and concentrates our attention on the deepest and most vivid experiences of the soul—its restlessness, its insatiable curiosity, its intense desire to plumb the deeps of knowledge, its quest for happiness, its ceaseless struggles after something other than itself—something greater, stronger, purer—in which it may find rest and peace. No wonder that, both as drama and opera, it has captured the imagination of men.

The drama is based upon a legend which was very widely believed in the Middle Ages, and which, in later times, seems to have crystallised around a person named Johannes Faustus, who is said to have lived in the fifteenth century. This Faustus was supposed to be a man of immense learning, a doctor of science and philosophy, a dabbler in magic, who had sold his soul to the Devil in order that he might rise above the limitations of the human mind and its physical and earthly conditions. It is this man whom Goethe makes the hero of his drama.

84 *The Ethical and Religious Value of the Drama*

As in the drama of Job, *Faust* begins with a scene in Heaven which is almost a parallel to that in Job. The angels are singing praises to the Most High and extolling the beauty and harmony of all His works. Mephistopheles, the Prince of Darkness, breaks in. He will not deign to join in the chorus of praise with the angels. He rather thinks that everything is not so good as the angels make out. And especially does he express his contempt for man, the crown of creation—a poor, “long, lank-legged grasshopper,” who prides himself on his reason, and yet is a “beastlier brute” than the brute beasts themselves. The Lord asks him if that is all he can say about creation.

“Are all things evil in thy sight?
Does nothing on the earth move right?
Dost thou know Faust—my servant?”

Mephistopheles replies that he does, and he offers to wager that if God will give him free course he will so tempt Faust as to bring him over to the realm of Evil. The permission is given.

“As long as on the earth endures his life,
To deal with him have full and free permission,
Man’s hour on earth is weakness, error, strife.”

Mephistopheles agrees to the conditions, and the scene in Heaven closes.

The next scene is on earth—in the study of Dr. Faust. It is night-time. He is sitting restlessly at his desk, overcome for the moment by a fit of pessimism and weariness of mind. He has won all the renown that learning can bring; he has acquired strange powers in the arts of alchemy and magic, he is revered and loved by all the people round about for his kindness and skill in his treatment of the many ills to which humanity is heir. He has explored

"Philosophy, and Law, and Medicine,
And over deep Divinity has pored
And here I am at last a very fool,
With useless learning cuist,
No wiser than at first"

With patient day and midnight toil he has sought to wrest the secrets of Life and Destiny from the bosom of Nature, and all his studies in Science, Art, and Philosophy only reveal to him that Nature is ever weaving "in the roaring loom of Time" the visible mantle of a higher and ever mysterious Spirit. That Spirit he cannot penetrate. All his labours are of no avail. He is sick and weary of this eternal strife of life, this conflict of the mind with the senses, this struggle with the elemental forces around him.

"Everything fails me—every thing—
These instruments, do they not all
Mock me? Lathe, cylinder, and ring,
And cog and wheel—in vain I call
On you for aid, ye Keys of Science,
I stand before the guarded door
Of Nature, but it bids defiance
To latch or ward
Mysterious in the blaze of day
Nature pursues her tranquil way
The veil she wears—if hand profane
Should seek to raise, it seeks in vain"

He wants to know what never can be known in this life—the secret of Life, Death, Eternity. He recalls the visions of his youth, when aspiration and imagination and ambition had led him to dream of untold power. But now his dreams have vanished, his aspirations are dead, his imagination can picture only failure, decay, oblivion. Full of weariness and depression he seizes a goblet of poison near him with the intention of ending existence—when, from the church hard by, the voices of the choristers singing their Easter hymns break upon

86 *The Ethical and Religious Value of the Drama*

his ear The music and the words bring back the days of his childhood, and the wave of depression passes away

“ And now am I once more a little child,
And old Remembrance, twining round my heart,
Forbids this act, and checks my daring steps—
Then sing ye on—sweet songs that are of Heaven !
Tears come, and Earth hath won her child again ! ”

In the next scenes, however, Faust's real struggle begins Mephistopheles himself appears and offers to Faust more entrancing pleasures, more subtle wisdom, than any he has hitherto known

“ In one hour shall more intense
Pleasure flow on every sense
Than the weary year could give,
In such life as here you live
Pictures fair and music's tone
Speak to eye and ear alone ,
But odours sweet around thee sporting,
Lingering tastes thy palate courting,
Feelings gratified, enraptured—
All thy senses shall be captured ”

All this and much more does Mephistopheles promise He will be the servant, the slave of Faust here on earth, *provided that* Faust will bind himself to be *his* servant and *his* slave in the life beyond Faust has not much belief in a life beyond He is so weary of life's striving, so sick with disappointment, and thwarted ambition, and rigid limitation of knowledge, that he curses the illusions of sense, curses the day-dreams and aspirations of the human mind, and accepts the terms of Mephistopheles

“ Henceforth do I devote and yield myself,
Heart, soul, and life, to rapturous excitement . . .
From this day forward am I dedicate
To the indulgence of tempestuous passion
Let pain and pleasure, loathing, and enjoyment
Mingle and alternate, as it may be,
Restlessness as man's best activity ”

Henceforth, for Faust, "the intellect is to be used in the service of the senses"—the way to perdition for men and civilisations alike

Mephistopheles and Faust depart on their travels dressed as young lords, and are soon mingling in scenes of revelry and dissipation. Faust, under the demonic and magical influence of his new friend, regains the spirit and the passion of youth. He meets Marguerite, the type of purity, of simplicity, of maidenly contentment and reserve. By the wiles of Mephistopheles he is brought into Marguerite's company at the house of her friend Martha. He sends her presents—a casket of jewels which turns her brain. A courtship begins in which occurs that fine passage on religious belief to which I will return later, and that exquisite love-song beginning

" My peace is gone,
My heart is sore
I never shall find it,
Ah, nevermore ! "

Then follow two or three poignant scenes where Marguerite, bowed with secret and unavailing sorrow, hears the chatter of scandal at the well; and later, before the image of the Mother of Sorrow, prays

" Mother benign
Look down on me !
No grief like thine
Thou who dost see
In his death-agony
Thy Son divine

" And who my wound can heal,
And who the pain can feel,
That rends asunder brain and bone ?
How my poor heart, within me aching,
Trembles and yearns, and is forsaken—
Thou knowest it—thou alone ! "

88 *The Ethical and Religious Value of the Drama*

Faust, seeing now the sorrow and ruin he has wrought, is torn by the conflict between conscience and passion, but Mephistopheles, eager for his prey, urges him on. Marguerite is deserted and left to bear as best she may the pangs of a wounded heart and the stings of conscience, while Faust and Mephistopheles go to seek new scenes and new modes of pleasure and dissipation. Valentine, Marguerite's brother, meets Faust. They fight. Valentine falls, and so murder is added to treachery. Faust and Mephisto then go to the peaks of the Brocken, in the Hartz Mountains, to join in the revelry of the Walpurgis Night, where the Prince of Darkness holds high festival on the first night in May. During that wonderful and magical scene Faust sees the white face of Marguerite as in a vision. Again remorse comes back. The gay scene passes. He curses himself for his unfaithfulness, and launches out in wild language against his tempter, who laughs back scornfully and asks—Who first began the game? Faust, wild with helplessness, demands to be taken back to Marguerite that he may comfort her. Mephistopheles agrees, and conducts him to the prison where Marguerite lies condemned to death for taking the life of her child—a scene overwhelming in its pathos and power. Stricken by sore memories and a remorseful conscience, her reason has almost gone, and she hardly recognises her lover. He tries to persuade her to fly with him, when she sees the form of Mephistopheles at the door of the cell. Recognising the Tempter, she shrinks back, and, dying, calls upon God in humble supplication.

“ Father in Heaven, have mercy on thy child !
Ye angels, holy hosts, keep watch around me.”

Voices from above cry .

“ She is saved ”—

while Mephistopheles disappears with Faust, and the drama ends Faust is not yet ready for salvation. His experiences have not yet purged his soul from evil desires, but in the second part of *Faust*, written many years later, he is redeemed and purified through penitence and remorse

What, then, is the meaning of this, the greatest poem which the eighteenth century produced? It throws into dramatic form the two great secrets or mysteries which enwrap the life of man. First, the secret of Nature, second, the secret of Personality. Nature, with her half-mocking, half-tragic notes, as she lures us on to discover her meaning! In what multitudinous ways does she kindle our varying desires and excite our passionate curiosity! All Science, as it melts her elements in its crucibles, and harnesses her forces to serve the material needs of man, is an attempt to wrest this secret from her bosom. All great Art is an attempt to unveil her face, to interpret her hidden meaning. All Philosophy is an attempt to expound her laws and to gather them into a few great generalisations. All Theology is a claim to have construed her secret meanings and laid bare the hidden mystery. Faith herself sings a resonant note of triumph as she thinks to rise above the mystery or penetrate to its source, until she bows her head in reverence, and sees, in the words of Emerson, that

“Profounder, profounder,
Man's spirit must dive,
His aye-rolling orbit
No goal will arrive
The heavens that now draw him
With sweetness untold,
Once found, for new heavens
He spurneth the old”

It is that secret which Faust brings so vividly before

us in all his questionings, his unrest, his unbounded aspirations to compass Infinite knowledge To that secret—or, rather, to that questioning—Goethe has only one answer, which he gives in that magnificent passage in which Faust replies to Marguerite when she asks him

“ Henry, dost thou believe in God ? ”

and Faust replies

“ Who dare Him name—

And who proclaim !

The All-embracing, All-sustaining One,

Say, doth He not embrace, sustain, include

Thee ? Me ? Himself ? Bends not the sky above ?

And earth, on which we are, is it not firm ?

And over us, with constant kindly smile,

The sleepless stars keep everlasting watch !

Does not All, that is,

Seen and unseen, mysterious all

Around thee, and within,

Press on thy heart and mind ?

Fill thy whole heart with it, and when thou art

Lost in the consciousness of happiness—

Then call it what thou wilt,

Happiness !—heart !—love !—God !

I have no name for it—Feeling is all,

Name, sound and smoke,

Dimming the glow of heaven ! ”

That passage, as a poetic expression of philosophic faith, is great indeed, but, as Mr Thomas Davidson points out in his thoughtful and appreciative criticism of the drama, on Faust's lips it is simply hypocritical high-falutin. It is an attempt to mislead Marguerite into the belief that he is as religious as she is, while, in his heart, he knows that his language is only a cover for selfishness and deceit Philosophically, it is Pantheism But Faust's Pantheism does not save him Neither does Marguerite's Catholicism save her. What

can save men and women when they are caught by the fires of passion which work like madness in the brain? Is *experience* of sin, to some natures, *necessary* to salvation or self-realisation? As William Blake truly says "If the doors of perception were cleansed, everything would appear to man as it is—Infinite But man has closed himself up till he sees all things through the narrow chinks of his own little cavern" But what, then, is it that will give him light? Is it only experience? And is it necessary that some souls must pass through such dreadful experiences as those of Faust and Marguerite ere the self can be purified and so realise its true nature? These are searching questions They bring before us the eternal problems of Heredity, Free-will, Fate, and Destiny. Sometimes, indeed, it seems as though people have to pass through the mill of suffering ere the self can be deepened and purified We do not fully realise what Evil is in any of its forms until we have passed through some dreadful experience of it, just as we do not fully realise what Death means until it visits our own homes, or war until it enters our own country. Shall we say, then, that it is necessary for the individual soul to pass through these experiences ere it can find the true way of self-realisation? If we say that, we should virtually give the rein to the wildest and most selfish impulses in man's nature The question is a most difficult one, and it is impossible to lay down universal rules But I think we may say this—that it is no more necessary for the soul to pass through all the experiences of evil which present themselves for its acceptance than it is necessary for a child to pass its hand through the fire in order to know that fire burns The illustration is inadequate, I know, because it includes only the idea of the physical welfare of the child and the knowledge which is concerned with the intellectual side of its nature, whereas moral evil is concerned with the desires, the

92 *The Ethical and Religious Value of the Drama*

passions, and the will, which often seem to defy the intellect. And yet, may we not say that if the soul could *see* or know the inevitable end, the inevitable misery of a given course of action, it would refrain from that course, just as a child refrains from putting its hand in the fire? What we need, then, is a deeper conception of the self and a deeper knowledge of the laws which condition its development. It is the function of life, not to destroy our nature (by the poison of evil), but to fulfil it through harmony, sanity, and health.

Now it is the function of Art and Literature, and especially of dramatic art, to present life in such a way that the presentment may take the place of experience, or, rather, act as a substitute for experience. Obviously that is an important and a necessary function, because we cannot possibly spend our life in going through all the experiences of our ancestors. Hence anything which helps us, by means of music, picture, novel, poem, or drama, so to mirror our life that the mirror serves either to emphasise experience or to take the place of experience, helps, by those means, the process of self-education and self-realisation. And that is as necessary, sometimes, for the saint as for the sinner. For one need only read Ibsen's *Brand* to see what a tragic mess even the saint may make both of his own life and the life of others.

Confronting and bound up with our human life, then, are these two mysteries—the mystery, the secret, of Nature, and the mystery, the secret, of Personality. The interest which this latter mystery excites is more absorbing, its pathos more saddening, the passions which it excites more blinding, the curiosity it kindles more poignant than that outer mystery of Nature, which, after all, may be but a veil. And yet its interpretations—for in the case of this mystery some sort of interpretation is forced upon us—its interpretations may bring a peace,

a calm, a solace, which may, in its turn, bring a light to the secret and mystery of Nature herself And here again, as with the secret of Nature, Science, Art, Philosophy, and Theology are eager with their several interpretations Its interests—the interests of personality—are as varied and diverse as human life itself, but it has one supreme interest for each one of us the clash of good and evil desires in our own nature, and the spiritual development or degeneration—salvation or damnation as the theologian would say—which the acceptance of these desires may bring when the soul has eaten its fill. It is this phase of the secret which Goethe brings before us in his *Faust* And in his treatment of it he follows the lead of Greek Tragedy which, as Aristotle said, purifies by pity and by fear—pity for human weakness and blindness and the suffering which it brings, fear lest we should fall so low Faust is not bad in himself. He represents the spirit of Inquiry, the spirit of Desire in the mind of man, seeking, struggling, aspiring towards infinite knowledge and fuller life But he represents that spirit tainted with one vice—the vice of self-gratification and self-glorification This inquiry, this search for Truth, this long toil and moil in the study and the laboratory—this, says Faust, must surely bring power, happiness, the revelation of the secrets of Destiny. It does *not* bring power, happiness, revelation There are limitations—limitations which must be accepted by all of us Faust will not accept these limitations, the dominant desire within him must be gratified at whatever cost—the eager, inquiring, restless self which *seeks to know*. With all his learning he has not learned the one supreme lesson, the one supreme law—the lesson and the law of the denial of the self when its gratification means the suffering and the ruin of others "Whosoever would save his life shall lose it, and whosoever would lose his life for My sake shall find it." Marguerite loses her life,

but gains her soul Faust gains life temporarily, but loses the better part of himself for a time Disappointed and embittered, he sells himself to Satan, thinking to escape from disappointment in a life of sensuous pleasure. The sequel, which issues in the blighting of Marguerite's life, the murder of her brother, the broken heart of her mother, the degradation of Faust himself, does purify by pity and by fear¹ But the lesson is not limited to one particular form of sin We see at once that happiness, even the happiness of unbounded knowledge, is not all, that selfishness, and the blindness which springs from it, stunts and deadens the soul, eats the heart out of character, and so turns human society into a Hell As Carlyle truly says "The mysterious relations which the poem emblemed still continue, the soul of man still fights with the dark influences of Ignorance, Misery, and Sin, still lacerates itself, like a captive bird, against the iron limits which necessity has drawn around it, still follows false shows, seeking peace and good on paths where no peace or good is to be found"

In this we have the answer to our questionings—or, rather, such answer as our limited minds can give In this we penetrate, in so far as we can, the secret mystery of Personality, and bring a lamp of faith which helps us to look with steadfast eyes on the secret of Nature herself We see that Love and Duty, at their highest, are one, and that, rightly conceived, our life is one with the Spirit which binds the stars in their courses, which prescribes the bounds of the oceans, and moves and throbs in the myriad forms and combinations which feed and minister to our senses There is a Faust in each one of us, and also a Marguerite, a heavenly messenger,

¹ See, however, on this definition of Aristotle's, and on the intellectual and emotional elements in tragedy, and their effect upon us, Dr W Macneile Dixon's thoughtful book on *Tragedy*, which I have only had an opportunity of reading since these pages went to press

calling us with heavenly voice, if we will but listen, to follow the promptings of the higher self—the spirit of God within

“ All things transitory
But as symbols are sent
Earth's insufficiency
Here grows to Event
The Indescribable,
Here it is done
The Woman-Soul leadeth us
Upward and on ”

There has been published recently a drama by Lunacharski, the Russian Minister of Education—a drama which I have not yet had an opportunity of reading, but which is said to represent the present generation of humanity collectively as Faust, revelling in the pride of wealth, intellect, and scientific achievement, and thereby, like the mediæval Faust, marching blindly to its doom I wonder! And where is the Woman-Soul that leadeth us “ upward and on ” ?

PART II

VII

SHELLEY'S "PROMETHEUS UNBOUND"

"Death is the veil which those who live call Life
They sleep, and it is lifted"—SHELLEY

SHELLEY, though a lyric rather than a dramatic poet, is, like Goethe, a good introduction to the modern drama. He is a modernist in that he lived fully one hundred years in advance of his time. Both his verse and his prose are full of the modern spirit. Liberalism, Socialism, and Internationalism have all felt his influence and breathe his spirit to-day. He was expelled from Oxford for heresy and blasphemy, but one needs only to read his *Essay on Christianity* to realise who was the real Christian and who the blasphemers. His *Prometheus Unbound* deals with the same legend as the *Prometheus Bound* of Æschylus. But Shelley has this dramatic advantage over Æschylus—that he had nearly eighteen hundred years of ecclesiastical Christianity behind him—a Christianity which, to its shame, had erected a God infinitely worse than the ancient Zeus or Jupiter, in that he was really thought capable of committing untold millions of his children to the most savage torments conceivable—"a for His glory," as Burns said. And the most astounding part of this history is that ecclesiastical or official Christianity had the blindness or the impudence to father this monstrous conception on to Jesus of Nazareth himself—a being full of mercy, compassion,

and love—who attributes these great qualities to God, the Spirit, Who “like as a Father pitieth His children,” and Who sends His rain and His sunshine on just and unjust alike I have not time to elaborate this here, but must again refer my readers to Shelley’s *Essay on Christianity*. It is sufficient to say that Shelley set himself to depose this Almighty Demon, and he does it, as we shall see, by giving to Prometheus the moral and spiritual qualities of Jesus of Nazareth. Yet so narrow and bitter was the theological spirit of the time, that Shelley’s poetry was condemned as immoral, one reviewer picturing him as “one of the darkest of the fiends, clothed with a human body,” while the University of Oxford, as I have said, distinguished itself by expelling him as a blasphemer. To-day, one of the most beautiful monuments in Oxford is the Shelley memorial, which is erected within the precincts of his own college. So does mankind garnish the tombs of the prophets!

I need not repeat the legend of Prometheus. The reader will remember that the drama of Æschylus closes at the point where the Titan hurls defiance at his tormentor, and threatens that the time will come when his power shall be undermined. For this further act of rebellion Zeus launches his lightnings and thunderbolts, and hurls the Titan to the deeps of Tartarus, the abode of tortured souls. There the play ends, and as the third drama of the series is lost we have no means of knowing how the great mind of the ancient dramatist resolved the problem with which he struggled—that is, how he reconciled the undeserved sufferings of Prometheus, as representing Humanity, with the “justice” of Almighty Zeus!

Shelley takes up the problem where the drama of Æschylus leaves it. He calls his drama *Prometheus Unbound*, because he wishes to show how Love and Righteousness must, in the very nature of things, even-

tually triumph over injustice, even though the latter may sometimes seem to be endowed with Almighty power.

The drama opens, like that of Æschylus, on the icy peaks of the Caucasus, amid falling snows and tempestuous winds, with the sea dashing its waves at the base of the mountains, and the stars shining above. Three thousand years have passed away—for the gods are immortal. Prometheus has been brought from the deeps of Tartarus and chained once more to the bare rocks of the mountains. At his feet sit the Ocean-Nymphs, Panthea and Ione. The vulture comes to gnaw his vitals daily, and the hounds of Hell rend and tear his flesh. The spirit of the Titan is as brave and unyielding as ever—but it has changed. Suffering has taught Indignation, and hatred of his tyrant, have given way to pity. Morning breaks as the drama opens with a great cry from Prometheus:

"Three thousand years of sleep-unsheltered hours,
And moments aye divided by keen pangs
Till they seemed years, torture and solitude,
Scorn and despair—these are mine empire
Ah me! alas, pain, pain ever, for ever!
No change, no pause, no hope! Yet I endure . . .
I speak in grief,
Not exultation, for I hate no more."

That is the note of the drama—Hate must die. Panthea and Ione comfort him with gentle words, and the Spirit of the Earth arises and tells him what joys and blessings his gifts have brought to mankind. But even while they speak, Mercury, the messenger of Jupiter (Zeus) comes to announce fresh tortures. Mercury, too, is changed, for while, in the drama of Æschylus, he insolently taunts the Titan, now, he says, he hates himself that he has to obey the commands of Almighty Wrong. He begs Prometheus to bend his soul in prayer

102 *The Ethical and Religious Value of the Drama*

and beseech the favour and forgiveness of omnipotence.
But the Titan rejects all thought of submission to wrong.

" I will not yield
Let others flatter crime, where it sits throned
In brief omnipotence I wait,
Enduring thus, the retributive hour
Call up the fiends "

The fiends come—the demons of pain, and fear, and hate, and clinging crime They taunt Prometheus with his sufferings, his helplessness, and the failure of his utopian plans to benefit human kind They tell of one who came forth, of gentle spirit, to suffer for mankind, but his words have fallen on deaf ears or have been twisted into creeds the very opposite of his teachings, and men are tortured and burnt, and maim and slay each other in the very name of him whose spirit was Love. So the torture goes on, while Prometheus cries

" Peace is in the grave
The grave hides all things beautiful and good,
I am a god, and cannot find it there
Nor would I seek it, for
The sights with which thou torturest gird my soul
With new endurance, till the hour arrives
When they shall be no types of things which are "

That is, Prometheus is sustained by faith in the ultimate victory of Love and Righteousness, and so, even at the darkest hour, the Spirit of the Earth comes to him to cheer his desolation with news of the fair spirits " whose homes are the dim caves of human thought," and immediately a Chorus of Spirits arises, radiant as the stars, and sings of the struggle for freedom, and the hunger for righteousness, and the aspiration for knowledge, which are already stirring men's hearts in unknown corners of the earth—choruses in which the words are so magically woven by the poet that they

seem to melt into music, and the first act ends with the solemn words of Prometheus

' I would fain
Be what it is my destiny to be—
The saviour and the strength of suffering men "

The second act opens in a lovely vale in the Indian Caucasus, to which the goddess Asia, the wife of Prometheus, has been banished

Note the beauty of the following lines as a description of the break of dawn

" The point of one white star is quivering still
Deep in the orange light of widening morn
Beyond the purple mountains through a chasm
Of wind-divided mist the darker lake
Reflects it now it wanes, it gleams again
As the waves fade, and as the burning threads
Of woven cloud unravel in the pale air
'Tis lost ' and through yon peaks of cloudlike snow
The roseate sunlight quivers hear I not
The Æolian music of her sea-green plumes
Winnowing the crimson dawn ? "

Asia is visited by Panthea, who tells her of the sufferings and the fortitude of Prometheus. While they sit there trying to give consolation each to the other, they are visited by spirits who tell them of the coming fall of Jupiter or Zeus, and the triumph of Prometheus in a reign of righteousness and love. The Spirits lead Asia and Panthea to the cave of a mysterious Being whom Shelley calls Demogorgon, who has the power to pierce the veil of Futurity and read what Destiny holds in store. Asia tells him of the labours of Prometheus, how he has brought the divine spark to man, how Science, Art, Music have brought their humanising influence into human life through his endeavours, and yet how he suffers for his labours and how some baleful, evil

influence still seems to thwart and blight the life of humanity. Who is it? asks Asia—who is it “rains down evil” on the world? It is the god Jupiter, says Demogorgon, *but he only rules through men’s belief in him*. Behind him, behind all—behind Fate, Time, Occasion, Chance, and Change—there dwells Eternal Love. Already the Immortal Hours are speeding to do her bidding. Already Jupiter’s power is waning. And so, indeed, it is, for in the next act the poet translates us to Heaven, where Jupiter is seated in triumph, surrounded by his satellites and messengers. Even as he boasts of his power the Spirit of the Hours, with Demogorgon, enters the courts of Heaven. Jupiter’s word flies harmless on the winds, his messengers refuse to obey him, and he is hurled from his throne into the deeps of oblivion. Almost immediately the scene changes, and we are on the peaks of the Caucasus once more. Asia, Panthea, Ione, the Spirit of the Earth, and Hercules, the deliverer of Prometheus, are there. Hercules unbinds Prometheus. The Spirit of the Earth trembles as though some new life thrills through her as Prometheus descends and predicts a lovelier age throughout the universe, when evil and error shall fall away from the human mind, and truth and love prevail.

“Hard-featured men, with proud or angry looks
 Or cold, staid gait, or false and hollow smiles,
 Or the dull sneer of self-loved ignorance,
 Or other such foul masks, with which ill thoughts
 Hide that fair being whom we spirits call men”—

all this has passed away. “Thrones, altars, prisons, judgment-seats, swords, sceptres, and tomes of reasoned wrong, glozed on by ignorance,” disappear in the radiant dawn of a new life. The very planets feel the beat and throb of a new spirit, and the Choruses of Spirits chant lyric after lyric such as poet surely never sang before

in such marvellous melody and beauty of language
The very words are music

"We come from the mind
Of human kind
Which was late so dusk, and obscene, and blind,
Now 'tis an ocean
Of clear emotion,
A heaven of serene and mighty motion

"And our singing shall build
In the void's loose field
A world for the Spirit of Wisdom to wield
We will take our plan
From the new world of man—
And our work shall be called the Promethean "

"Ceaseless, and rapid, and fierce, and free,
With the Spirits which build a new earth and sea,
And a heaven where yet heaven could never be

"Solemn, and slow, and serene, and bright,
Leading the Day and outspeeding the Night,
With the powers of a world of perfect light

"We whirl, singing loud, round the gathering sphere,
Till the trees, and the beasts, and the clouds appear
From its chaos made calm by love, not fear "

The Spirits of the Earth, the Moon, the Hours,
Prometheus, Asia, Panthea, and Ione, and the Chorus
all join together in jubilant lyric and choral chant, and
the play ends with the declaration by Demogorgon of
the spiritual principle which must ultimately triumph
over Evil

"To suffer woes which Hope thinks infinite ;
To forgive wrongs darker than death or night ,
To defy Power, which seems omnipotent ,
To love and bear , to hope till Hope creates
From its own wreck the thing it contemplates ,
Neither to change, to flatter, nor repent ,
This, like thy glory, Titan, is to be
Good, great, and joyous, beautiful and free ,
This is alone Life, Joy, Empire, and Victory "

The whole poem is really the outcome of a spirit and a vision as ardent as that of Æschylus, Isaiah, and the seer of Patmos, expressed in language more musical and magical than that of any other poet of our time

But now let us turn to the problem which has beset us throughout all these great dramas. We have seen how the unknown author of *Job*, Æschylus in *Prometheus Bound*, Shakespeare in *King Lear*, Shelley in *Prometheus Unbound*—all struggle with this dark problem—Why does Evil exist? Why do the good suffer undeservedly? We have seen that none of them answer the problem, for the simple reason that it cannot be answered here. It is the mystery which is at the heart of religion. We see only in part and we know only in part. We must wait until the broken arc is made whole, and we see the perfect round. "Death is the veil which those who live call Life; they sleep, and it is lifted."

But though none of these great minds give us an answer to the problem, they all, as we have seen, give us hints and gleams which help to guide us on our way. Shelley saw that the false gods which men too often take as their guide in life are frequently but a reflection of their own desires, fears, and imaginings. And Shelley saw that the power of these false gods must be broken down by Promethean, Christ-like men, ere the true God, the spirit of Love, can reign in men's hearts, and the Kingdom of God, the Kingdom of understanding Love, be established on earth. Child-sacrifice, slavery, torture for witchcraft, persecution for religious opinion, Catholics and Protestants alike torturing, burning, and slaying each other in the name of God—all these false gods had to be overthrown ere the spirit of toleration, charity, and sympathy could gain possession of the human heart. So, too, when men are slaying each other in war, and praying to the God of Battles for victory, their conception

of God needs to be broken down, as we shall see later, ere the spirit of Love and Mercy can take its place. As John (Viscount) Morley truly says "If we find ourselves living amid a generation of cruel and unjust and darkened spirits we may be assured that it is their beliefs on what they deem highest that have made them so. There is no counting with certainty on the justice of men who are capable of fashioning and worshipping an unjust divinity, nor on their humanity, so long as they incorporate inhuman motives in their most sacred dogma, nor on their reasonableness while they rigorously decline to accept reason as a test of truth"

Now Shelley lived at a time when a cruel and frightful conception of God ruled in men's hearts. England herself was under the rod of a cruel despotism. The infamous doctrine of an eternal Hell was preached from thousands of pulpits. The Church had sunk to a low ebb of spiritual life. The State was corrupt. Industrial life, in field, mine, and factory, both for children and adults, was a system of squalid and hopeless servitude. The religion which could tolerate such a life seemed to Shelley worse than atheism. "Children of God," he cried, "this is the way you treat your brothers! Of what character, then, is the God you serve!" He himself became a Prometheus, and poured forth burning words of indignation which remind us of Wesley's remark to a Calvinist, "Your God is my Devil." "Few poets," says Stopford Brooke, "have done more than he to overthrow false conceptions of God, to undo the network of false reverence, to shake the foundations of injustice, of cruel superstition, of tyranny, of caste, of slavery of mind and body. He not only denounced injustice—he loved justice and revealed it—not vague justice, but justice made universal in act. Freedom was dear to him, and, above all, Love; and his poetry is steeped in these as a summer garden is in sunshine"

It is impossible to understand Shelley's *Prometheus* or his philosophy of life until we have grasped his conception of the universe as a living whole, the moving spirit of which is Love. He was, indeed, a follower of Plato, but to Plato he added something of his own and something of the spirit of Jesus of Nazareth. He hated materialism because he saw that it led to selfishness and the usurpation of unjust power. Behind all, behind Nature, behind man, behind the passing tyrannies of the world, behind both Jupiter and Prometheus, and especially behind the erroneous and superstitious conceptions of men, behind "Fate, Time, Occasion, Chance, and Change"—he saw the spirit of Eternal Love. For him, indeed, the Supreme Spirit is Love, and love everywhere is a part of the Supreme Spirit. But before this Spirit can become visible and actual, as well as potential, on earth and in the life of man, the mind must be illumined by its light, the heart fed by its warmth, the will inspired by its self-sacrificing courage and power. Of that life Shelley's *Prometheus* is the type, as Christ is the type—the life of mercy, of forgiveness, of love, as against the life of hatred, of punishment, of blind force. But the type does not give itself as a sacrifice to appease the wrath of a savage or an offended God—it rather sets itself to break down such barbarous and Jupiter-like conceptions. It is the Spirit of Love itself, in its human incarnations, offering itself as a sacrifice for the liberation of its brothers from the thralldom of error and oppression. It is the teaching of the Immanence of the Spirit, not only in outward nature, but in the soul of man—the Spirit which is calling us, ever calling each one of us, to leave the lower mud-rake reaches of our life, to open our eyes, and climb to those diviner heights of being where, as Shelley says

"The human love lies
Which makes all its gazes on Paradise"

But Shelley, unlike the hollow drums which try to echo the tones of Love to-day, which preach Love at one moment and bless their bayonets, bombs, and iron-clads the next—Shelley committed himself wholly to Love Love, not as a miraculous power ruling from the skies, but as an active principle working in men's hearts, and, by the splendour of its sacrifices, producing its natural reactions in the hearts of the spiritually blind and the ignorantly wicked. Like Jesus, like Paul, like John, and James, and Peter, and the early Christians, like St. Francis, and Tolstoi, and Gandhi—without a weapon, he would change, as the early Christians changed, the face of the world Yet, like those men also, he was no passive pacifist His soul was aflame with a spirit of active spiritual resistance—spiritual, because he knew and had faith in the compelling power of Love Time after time, in the *Prometheus*, in the *Masque of Anarchy*, and in others of his poems, he insists on this invincible power of unarmed love

“Stand ye calm and resolute,
Like a forest close and mute,
With folded arms, and looks which are
Weapons of an unvanquished war

And if then the tyrants dare,
Let them ride among you there,
Slash, and stab, and maim, and hew
What they like, and let them do

With folded arms and steady eyes,
And little fear and less surprise,
Look upon them as they stay
Till their rage has died away

Then they will return with shame
To the place from which they came,
And the blood thus shed will speak
In hot blushes on their cheek,

Every woman in the land
 Will point at them as they stand—
 They will hardly dare to greet
 Their acquaintance in the street

And the bold, true warriors,
 Who have hugged Danger in wars,
 Will turn to those who would be free,
 Ashamed of such base company "

His words were like silver bells, which penetrated even the ears of the deaf To the short-sighted militarist and rationalist objection that unarmed love invites reckless sacrifice and slaughter, he would point to the millions slaughtered on modern battlefields, generating hatreds and wars which "endless wars still breed," with the futile and negative result of the substitution of one militarism for another, or one empire for another, and the unanswered question which little Peterkin puts to old Kaspar

" 'But what good came of it at last ? '
 Quoth little Peterkin.
 'Why, that I cannot tell,' said he,
 'But 'twas a famous victory,' "

whereas the single sacrifices of a Jesus, a Paul, or a Gandhi seem to disarm or render innocuous for a time the poisonous hatreds which blind men to their doom, and illumine the pages of history and impregnate the hearts of unborn generations with the fructifying seed of Love

At only one point does Shelley's argument seem to fail—that is, in his assumption that the mass of men are equal to the sublime self-restraint and self-control which Supreme Love requires The mass of men are not yet equal to that, and because they are not equal to it, not millions only, but perhaps scores of millions, may attempt to slay each other in orgies of hatred ere the remnant learn the secret of life. It is a great and

terrible mystery But we, who have lived through more than one war, know what happens to men and nations when war breaks out It makes men blind with hatred and mad with passion But that is no reason why those who have seen the light should not be faithful to it, for the light spreads by the contagion of example Not until men are trained to invincible self-control in love will Shelley's ideal be realised, and men learn that "he that ruleth his spirit is greater than he that taketh a city"

However that may be, there can be no doubt that Shelley himself, after the troublous and passionate years of his youth and early manhood had passed, strove to "live the life"—the life of self-control in love His mode of living was simple as a hermit's He visited the sick. He was unstinting in his charity He was ever a plain liver and high thinker His voice was as a trumpet-call to the poor and the oppressed and to all who love justice and liberty And though, like the author of Job, and Æschylus, and Shakespeare, he does not solve our intellectual difficulties, he, like them, gives us gleams of light He brings to us a new type of faith, a new type of life—as yet what the biologists would call a "rudimentary type" He, not the Churches, are in the line of the true Christian tradition—the line of the suffering Servant of Israel, of Gethsemane and Calvary, of the early Christian martyrs, of St Francis, of Tolstoi. He brings into our minds the spirit of his Prometheus—courage, steadfastness, endurance, gentleness, understanding love And he helps to make religion, not a harsh and forbidding thing, but a generous and loving impulse which brings its own reward—a religion which looks ever forward to the realisation of that mighty kingdom of Faith, Hope, and Love which, if ethical aspiration and religious yearning and the Lord's Prayer have any meaning at all, will some time hold sway over the life of humanity.

VIII

IBSEN'S "BRAND" AND THE PROBLEM OF SELF-REALISATION

(I) THE SAINT

THERE is no other dramatist of our time whose works have called forth such severe criticism and fierce discussion as those of Henrik Ibsen, save perhaps Bernard Shaw. There is no dramatist who has been so bitterly attacked and so grievously misunderstood. But a writer cannot achieve greatness without expressing in some measure the thought and the spirit of the age in which he lives, and, indeed, the spirit of the ages which are going to live; and it is well to acquaint ourselves with that thought and spirit, even though we may not be able to agree with it. Ibsen's dramas are a trumpet-call to the spirit, urging us to put aside all cowardice, insincerity, and make-believe, and to give our lives, for good or ill, to the great constructive work which each soul may find to do if it will only open its eyes and unstop its ears.

It is impossible to form an adequate idea of Ibsen's work and spiritual message without taking into consideration the nature of the country and people amid which he was born. Climatic and racial influences have much to do in the development of a man's temperament and personality. Ibsen was a Norwegian—born in the land which, in its most northern region, has a year of

but one day and one night—the summer one continuous day, filled with life and light and motion; the winter one long ice-bound night of cold and darkness Ibsen partakes of the nature of the land of which he was a child. He has been called the "poet of doubt." Perhaps he would be more truly called the poet of Will and Fate—of the conflict of the human soul with Destiny, of the tragedy which springs from the weakness of human will battling against the iron limitations of Fate. In all his dramas we feel that the characters are the embodiment of forces which are something more than human—the forces of heredity, environment, destiny, the mighty world-will which expresses itself through us, and uses us for its own ends and purposes—that "divinity that shapes our ends rough-hew them how we will."

Brand brings vividly before us that conflict of our own Will with Fate, of Principle with Expediency, as it affects our moral and religious life. On its first appearance the drama was received by his countrymen with the greatest enthusiasm. In England, a nation which loves expediency, the enthusiasm was tempered by criticism and discussion.

Pastor Brand, the hero of the drama, is a young Norwegian clergyman filled with a deep and an intense longing to realise the highest possible type of religious life, to live, and if need be to die, like Christ, in the service of God. To do this he deems it necessary to devote himself wholly to God, to have no compromise between Sunday religion and week-day materialism and conventionalism, but to devote every moment of his life to the realisation of what he believes to be the Will of God—a dangerous policy, for when a man thinks that he himself expresses or embodies the Will of God he is apt to have scant respect for the will of others when their will clashes with his own. He adopts as his motto, "All or nothing." He will have no half-measures.

He sees around him men and women, professedly religious, who live a sordid, temporising, timorous life, and who are quite willing to repeat the passwords and doctrines of religion so long as it will pay to do so, but who, the moment they are called upon to give their lives in the service of Truth or the service of God, cling to their earth-born deities—their money, their honours, their property, their families—and shrink in fear from the sacrifice which Truth always demands, that is, the sacrifice that each one shall be true to himself and shall give up all cowardice, hypocrisy, and insincerity at all costs. Most people are willing to give to God a little bit of their lives—say a fraction of a seventh part of it on one day in the week—but they dare not or will not give all. They want a God who will save them any trouble by dying for them on the Cross, but as for dying for Truth and Right themselves and so becoming Christs, they shrink back—save in time of war, when men, worshipping the same God, and misled and deceived by a cloud of falsehood, are wrought to a frenzy of courage by fear and the hatreds and horrors which are born of war.

This inherent fear in human nature is well brought out by Ibsen in a scene on the sea-shore, where a woman from across the fiord is asking for a minister to attend the dying moments of her husband. The family are starving, and the man has killed his youngest child because he cannot bear to see it suffer, and has then attempted suicide; but he fears to die without a pastor's assurance of pardon for his sin, and yet he dare not live with the blood of his child upon his hands. Brand hears the woman's story and offers to go, although a wild storm is raging at sea. He asks for men to row him across the fiord. But none will volunteer. They say it is madness to attempt it in such a storm, they have their own wives and families to think of. That is the sort of thing that calls forth Brand's withering scorn. Their

God, he says, is a feeble deity, grown old. He was once a strong and jealous God Who demanded the sacrifice of "all or nothing," but he is now content with only a small part of human service. Such a God, Brand says, is only an idol which must be dethroned from its place in the human heart and mind. He again calls for volunteers, and offers to row himself across the fiord if he can get only one man to steer the boat. No man will come forward, but a woman responds. *She* will dare to risk her life in God's service. Only that very morning she has been betrothed to an artist named Einar, and they were looking forward to a happy married life together. But something in Brand's passionate looks and tones fascinates her. She bids Einar, her lover, steer the boat for Brand. He refuses. She renounces him for ever, and offers her services to Brand, and together they row safely through the storm across the raging sea. Under Brand's influence she gains a deeper conception of what religion means and requires. Einar tries to win her back to him. He tells her that she is choosing storm instead of peace and calm, sorrow instead of joy, death instead of life. And Agnes answers.

"Into the night I go Through Death.
Behind, there gleams the morning dawn"

From that moment she becomes the devoted friend and follower of Brand, and ultimately his wife. But not before he has placed before her the conditions on which they must join their lives. If she is to be his help-mate she must be prepared to surrender every tie of human affection, she must be willing to tear every tendril from her heart by the roots, if necessary, in her devotion to religion and to God. There must be no surrender to human weakness. "He that loveth father or mother, or son or daughter, more than me, is not worthy of me."

Agnes accepts the terms, and they begin their life-work. Brand for some time is drawn by the idea of going out into the world to break down its idols, its false gods, and its low ideals. But on further reflection he decides to stay with his own people, and so he takes charge of a little church on the margin of a cold, sunless fiord, overcast by towering mountains capped with ice and snow. There he devotes himself to the work of his pastorate, and by his unswerving devotion brings a new spirit into the life of his church and his people. Then the trial begins. His mother, who has been a hard, covetous woman, scraping together all the money on which she could lay her hands, is lying on her deathbed, and desires to receive the sacrament of the Church and the assurance of forgiveness of her sins. Brand refuses to administer the sacrament, or even to see her, save on condition that she will devote the whole of the wealth for which she has toiled, and striven, and sinned, to charitable and religious purposes. She offers to give half, three-quarters, nine-tenths. But Brand is inexorable. "All or nothing," he says. God's love is not to be purchased by a huckstering bargain. And the old woman dies unforgiven, saying that God is not so hard as her own son.

Then comes his own trial. A baby has been born to them, and Brand and Agnes have bestowed upon it all the wealth of their affection. But both soon begin to notice the pale cheek and waning strength of the little one, and one morning the doctor tells them that if they stay another month in the sunless village it will mean certain death to the child. Brand immediately begins to make preparations for leaving the village. But the doctor, in a moment of raillery, twits him with being untrue to his own teaching. To everyone else he has been preaching his stern doctrine—"all or nothing" in God's service. Now, says the doctor, when his natural

affections bring him into conflict with his duty to his flock he gives way. The taunt strikes home. His native resolution comes back to him. What Brand preaches to others he must himself practise, otherwise his preaching is mere lip-service. He now decides to remain at his post, whatever happens. He must not quit God's service. In a scene of unspeakable anguish he brings Agnes round to his point of view. Whatever God demands she will give. They decide to remain in the village, and the life of the little one slowly ebbs away.

After the baby's death Brand tells Agnes that there must be no repining, no regrets, no longing for the lost one. The child is with God. What is done in God's service must be done cheerfully and with rejoicing. Christmas Eve comes round—it is the anniversary of the child's death. Agnes would like to draw back the curtain of her window so that the light may stream upon the little grave. But Brand will not hear of that. The loss and the sacrifice must be borne cheerfully, not grudgingly. "He that loveth wife, or sister, or brother, or child, yea, or his own life also, more than me, cannot be my disciple."

The same night a wild gipsy woman calls at the house and asks for clothing to protect her starving child from the fierce frost and cold. The garments of her own child Agnes has kept as sacred relics, treasuring them fondly and lovingly in memory of the lost one. Brand bids her give them to the beggar-woman to clothe the changeling which has been born amid sin and curses. She brings out the garments and gives them, with breaking heart, to the beggar. One only she tries to keep back—it is her child's little woollen cap. She attempts to hide it so that Brand may not know of her treasure. But he sees her action, and again he reminds her of their terrible formula, "All or nothing." This is God's service, and he who would see God must sacrifice

118 *The Ethical and Religious Value of the Drama*

all Agnes submits. But she reminds him, in the words of the Bible, that "he who sees Jehovah dies." And she must die. The struggle has been too much for her. She has given up everything, and now her spirit is broken. She has not the indomitable tenacity of purpose of Brand himself. She tells him she may possibly live on if he will let her go back to her old and pleasant ways and thoughts of life, and forget his stern and almost inhuman creed. Then Brand enters on a terrible struggle with himself. The vision of his lonely life when Agnes shall be gone rises up before him, and he declares that she shall not be taken from him. But again his own formula rings in his ears, "All or nothing for God." And again his religious fanaticism lures him to his doom. "'Tis victory's victory," he says, "to forfeit all." He will be true to his original mission. He will stay with his people. He will open their eyes to the false God in whom they have been taught to place their faith. Agnes dies, and is placed by the side of the child and the grandmother in the cold churchyard, leaving Brand to fight his way alone in the world, with bleeding heart and a mind full now of doubt and anguish.

Swept on, however, by religious fervour and imagination, new projects take possession of Brand's mind. Agnes had spoken about the little church in which the villagers met as being too mean and small. It seemed to limit and confine their worship and their aspirations. Its narrow forms and crude modes of worship oppressed her, and the church itself was symbolical of these. Brand resolves to build another. He will dedicate his mother's wealth to the erection of a church which shall be worthy of the religion he preaches. It shall be the symbol, not of a narrow faith and doctrine, but of the wide and far-reaching purposes of God over all our human life and work—the daily toil, the evening rest, the joys of childhood, the strenuous work of manhood,

the sorrows of age. The villagers help in the work, and in due course the church is reared. But it is no sooner finished than Brand sees how falsely and mistakenly his people estimate his purpose and his spirit. They compliment him upon his generosity. They point out how his gift may further his prospects of promotion in the Church. They decide upon a service of dedication, which is really a service in their own glorification rather than the glorification of God. The Dean also, knowing Brand's weakness, enters into a long argument with him, and stresses the need of suavity, opportunism, and expediency. Maddened by their spiritual blindness and sordid materialism, and realising that the religious life of the people is based largely upon mere conventionality and pretence, Brand locks the church door on the morning of the dedication ceremony and flings the key into the river. Then he calls those of his flock who are still faithful to him to follow him into the world over the mountain heights to work, single-mindedly, in the cause of God. When, weary and footsore, they halt, and learn that they must look for lifelong toil, that they must strip themselves of every comfort and be prepared to spend their lives in one continuous "living sacrifice," they turn fiercely upon their leader, and stone and curse him into the wild snow mountains.

Weary, deserted, and alone, Brand looks back upon the past—upon the child, the wife, the mother, the friends, the home, he has lost. Even God appears to have rejected him. He passes through his Gethsemane. He has striven to be like unto God, and yet God will not accept him. Through the storm his doom seems chanted.

"Never, never, canst be like Him,
For in flesh thou hast been made
Do His bidding or desert Him,
Either way alike thou'rt lost!
Worm, thou never canst be like Him,
Though thou drain the cup of death"

Then, in a feverish dream, Agnes appears to him and tells him that all his loss and sorrow is but a dream. He may still have peace and joy and comfort if he will but renounce his terrible formula, "All or nothing," and fall in with the easy ways of the world around him. But the old spirit of religious fervour and devotion returns upon him, and he spurns the voice of "the Tempter." He will lose wife and child and life itself rather than make terms with the devil's breath of compromise. He is humbled by his experiences and his sorrows, but he will be true to God's will to the last, even though his life's work seems to lie in ruin behind him. But now the end comes as by the decree of Fate. A half-mad girl, who owes her existence to a man whom Brand's mother has rejected in her youth, follows him into the mountains, thinking him to be the thorn-crowned Christ. At that moment a wild hawk wheels overhead, and the girl, who carries a hunter's gun, fires at the bird. She misses her aim, and the shot, entering the massed bank of snow, brings down an avalanche. As the snow is about to overwhelm and bury Brand, with all his broken ideals and his ruined life, under its enormous weight, he cries to God to answer the heartrending question, whether the human will weighs a single grain in the scales of salvation? The play closes as the thunder of the crashing ice fills the valley, and the mysterious answer is born on the spirit-wind.

"He is the God of Love"

A dramatist, of course, does not necessarily put his own opinions or theories into the mouth of any particular character. Hence it would be a mistake to suppose that the doctrine of Brand, "All or nothing," is the doctrine of Ibsen. But it is difficult to understand Ibsen, because he brings into play great and *opposite* principles which clash and conflict both in the life of humanity

and with the spiritual forces which lie behind Nature and evolution. In *Brand* Ibsen brings into opposition and conflict two great spiritual forces or concepts (1) the Will of God, as conceived by an intensely religious mind; (2) the instincts and feelings of average humanity, protesting, enduring, and suffering under the rule of that Will. It is the tragedy of the individual will in conflict with the great World-will, the struggle of the "what is" with the "what ought to be", the conflict of an unconventional ideal with the ways of use and wont. We all know the result when a hard, narrow, yet strong mind holds that it knows what the Will of God is under all circumstances and strives to impose that Will upon others. It ends in tyranny and persecution on the one side and martyrdom on the other.

And yet the conflict is one of the conditions of progress. Take Jesus: his great object was to bring the Will of God or the Kingdom of God down into the lives of men—to inaugurate a new era, a new kingdom. Yet the world thought him mad and crucified him as a common criminal. Take the early Christians: they too, like Brand, forsook family, friends, comfort, riches, and worldly honours for their faith, and they were thrown to the lions or condemned to nameless tortures. Take the words of Socrates when the judges in what was reputed to be the wisest city in the world threatened him with death if he did not alter his teaching: "If you say to me, Socrates, this time we will not mind your wrong-doing and will let you off, but upon one condition, that you are not to inquire and speculate in this way any more, and that if you are caught doing this again you shall die; if this was the condition on which you let me go, I should reply, Men of Athens, I honour and love you, but I shall obey God rather than you, and while I have life and strength I shall never cease from the practice and teaching of philosophy,

and exhorting and teaching everyone after my own manner" So, too, with the Protestants, and the Puritans, the anti-slavery reformers, and the advocates of the emancipation of women This, I say, is one of the inevitable conditions of progress—that the reformer, the idealist, the man who believes that he is animated by a clearer vision of right and justice than his fellows, is often needed to prevent society from sinking into the spiritual stagnation of use and wont Such men are the salt of the earth They bring us freedom, enlightenment, "more abundant life" Their own age often stones them, and after-generations garnish their tombs! That is the tragedy of life, for the reformer and the martyr do not belong to themselves alone They are the children, not only of their own time—they are the children of unnumbered generations who have made them what they are, children of the Eternal Spirit

And yet, on the other hand, society has to protect itself against fanaticism and narrow-mindedness A reign of the saints, every one of whom was possessed by the notion that *he* represented the Will of God, would be a very trying reign—if it were possible As a matter of fact mankind in general are not saints, and are not likely to be We cannot fit perfect patterns to imperfect types We have to take men as we find them, and so we compromise with evil and imperfection Here, then, is the clash of spiritual forces—right against wrong, good against evil, truth against falsehood, principle against expediency And yet we cannot always realise the right and the good, because of the imperfections of the human heart and human society Hence arise compromise, expediency And compromise is absolutely necessary Life itself is a compromise—a process of continual adaptation and readjustment of inner strength to outer forces But here Ibsen raises his protest We tend to compromise too much, he says, until we become the

veriest cowards We are always asking ourselves, as the conventional characters in *Brand*—Einar, the Dean, the Mayor, the Schoolmaster—are always asking themselves Will this or that course of action injure my prospects, my business, my church, my social standing? How will it affect my position in society, in my profession, in my political career? and so on, until we become mere temporisers, with no more moral backbone than a jelly-fish Thus we lose character, individuality, robustness of thought In politics compromise is carried so far that men will condone even dishonesty and palpable injustice if it happens to be done by their own party, or they will so palter with words and use them in a double sense that one never knows what they really stand for Think of President Wilson, and Signor Nitti, and General Smuts, and General Botha, signing the Treaty of Versailles and then confessing afterwards that they had signed what they knew to be unjust, so plunging Europe into years of economic chaos and condemning thousands to premature death!

In religion compromise tends to breed insincerity and selfishness We shall see this more clearly when we come to consider *Peer Gynt* Men have not the courage of their convictions They often go to church merely for the sake of keeping up appearances Or they refuse to think about debateable matters at all, and so help the forces of apathy, stagnation, and reaction Against all that Ibsen raises his voice in strong protest "Live out your life to the full," he seems to say. "Don't temporise, don't compromise too much Life is a continual fight against spiritual blindness, faintheartedness, or wrong-headedness. Have done with lies and half-truths Choose poverty, with courage and sincerity for companions, rather than riches with cowardice and insincerity Fling your thought and your effort into the struggle of life Let people call you what they will—

your sincerity will, in the end, prove of greater worth than timidity or selfishly compromising insincerity "

"What does God want," cried Brand, "with senile souls about His footstool? Has He not proclaimed it aloud that it is only when the blood spurts high through all the veins of the heart that He chooses you for His inheritance? It is only as children that you can win His Kingdom. No man can hobble in thither. Come, then, men and women both, show yourselves with fresh children's faces in Life's great Church. That Church has neither bound nor limit. The floor is the green earth, the moorland, the meadow, the sea, and the fiord, the heavens alone can span the vault, it grows so great. There life and faith shall melt together. It shall accept daily toil as in perfect unity with rule and doctrine. There shall the labour of the day be one with flight along the path of the stars, one with children's play round the Christmas-tree "

And yet in this drama Ibsen shows also the futility of fanaticism—for what becomes of Brand and his work when he carries his foolish motto, "All or nothing," to extremes? The result is that he is driven to work in the cold barren mountains, where all his labour is mere futility and failure. And as the avalanche falls and crushes him with its terrific weight the cry seems to come from the spirit of the mountains

"He is the God of Love "

That is, Brand has left human affection, which, at its purest and best, and in so far as it is creative, is the offspring of divine love, out of his theological scheme—or, rather, he has subordinated it to his narrow intellectual creed. He worships Will and Power, but there is something higher and lovelier in the universe than Will and Power—"the Light that lighteth every man that cometh into the world," the light of Love, for "God is Spirit,

God is Love" Had Brand mingled something of this spirit with the intensity of his religious passion it would have moderated his fanaticism and made his work more fruitful for good. It is hard, indeed, to draw the line in the right place, and nearly all the wise men of Jesus' and Socrates' day thought they were doing right in condemning those great souls to death. Perhaps a workable line might be drawn in this way: that in the region of ideas and the freedom to express ideas we ought never to compromise. Freedom of thought and speech is really worth dying for, and that is virtually what Jesus, and Socrates, and Bruno, and Servetus did give their lives for. But in the region of the realisation or the practical application of ideas in our daily and communal life, there we are bound to compromise, though not, of course, selfishly, insincerely, or dishonestly. A half-loaf is better than no bread. Palliatives—for which some of our extremest friends profess such fine scorn—palliatives *have* moved the world onward. Where would democratic government have been to-day had we not wrested political freedom from the reactionary classes by instalment after instalment of reform, and, by the gradual extension of educational facilities to all, prepared the way for further progress. The true way of the idealist and the reformer is ever to bear his ideal in mind as a thing to be aimed at, to be unceasing in his devotion to it, to take what he can get towards the realisation of it, and then, like Oliver Twist, go on asking for more. By this means not only are reforms secured and a surer basis of intelligence gained for further effort, but the reformer, whether political, social, or religious, avoids the shift and disreputable ways of the trimmer and the time-server. Let our ideals inspire our conduct, and the expedencies of the hour will fall into their due place. For, as Viscount Morley truly says "Unless a man follow out his ideas to their full

conclusion, without fear of what the conclusion may be, it is impossible that he should acquire a commanding grasp of principles. And a commanding grasp of principles is at the very root of coherency of character." And coherency of character is the thing that tells. "The law of things is that they who tamper with veracity, from whatever motive, are tampering with the vital forces of human progress. Our comfort and the delights of the religious imagination are no better than forms of self-indulgence when they are secured at the cost of that love of truth on which, more than on anything else, the increase of light and happiness among men must depend. We have to fight and do lifelong battle against the forces of darkness, and anything that turns the edge of reason [be it insincerity, ambiguity, or the double use of words] blunts the surest and most potent of our weapons."

That, surely, is the lesson of *Brand*—be true to thyself—thou, who art a part of God's spirit! But be sure it is thy highest self. That way, only, lies salvation. We shall see this more clearly in the next play.

IX

IBSEN'S "PEER GYNT" AND THE PROBLEM OF SELF-REALISATION

(II) THE SINNER

"PEER GYNT" is an astonishing play—astonishing in that it ranges from the fantastic, the ludicrous, the ridiculous, the satirical, and the ironic, to the pathetic and the sublime. It is divided into five acts and thirty-eight scenes, and its sudden turns and changes lead almost as suddenly from laughter to tears, and from tears to laughter. Peer Gynt himself is a character in Norseland folk-lore, and has been compared to Faust. But Peer Gynt is something more than Faust, for while Faust has at least the courage to sell his soul to the Devil for a consideration, Peer Gynt makes terms in turn with the world, the flesh, the Devil, and with religion in order to save—or shall I say realise?—his soul or "self." While there is hope for Brand, in that he is always striving to bring his little limited self into harmony with a greater Self outside him—whether we call that Self Humanity or God—there is no hope for Peer Gynt, in that his whole conception of life and the universe revolves around his own egoistic soul. *He* will not sell himself for anything unless he can make a profit out of the transaction. Everything—the world, the flesh, the Devil, religion—must bring grist to *his* mill. Hence

he can never get outside himself, into that larger Self, that larger Life, which means salvation

And yet there is something of Peer Gynt in each one of us, just as there is something of Faust in each one of us. That is why the appeal of the drama is so universal. In his enormous, his blind, egotism Peer Gynt represents the limitations which beset every human soul. Someone has said that he is also a type of the Norse people at a particular period of its development—that period of romanticism which Ibsen himself helped to kill. But if one were to say that before a Norwegian audience I fancy it would be regarded as an insult, just as it would be regarded as an insult by Englishmen if one were to say that the vulgar loud-voiced Jingo who sings the music-hall ditty,

“We don’t want to fight,
But by Jingo if we do,”

is typical of the average Englishman. And yet, just as there is something of the Jingo in most Englishmen, especially when their toes are trodden upon, so I dare say there is something of Peer Gynt in most Norsemen, as there is in human nature everywhere.

The play opens in a scene on a wooded hill-side farm belonging to Peer’s mother, Åse. Peer is a strongly built youth of twenty, and he has been telling his mother of a ride he has had on the back of a wild buck on the ridge of a narrow range of mountains, over glaciers and landslips, with gorges hundreds of fathoms deep on either side. His mother roundly accuses him of lying, knowing his romantic tongue, but he tells the story—an old folk-story adapted to himself—with such verisimilitude that she is almost persuaded to believe it true. During the dialogue more than a hint is given that there is an eccentric strain of heredity at work in Peer—his father has been a graceless pleasure-loving roysterer—a circum-

stance which complicates the problem of the destiny of the self. His mother continues to rail at him for his loose habits and neglect of the farm. Peer laughs at her scoldings, and declares that he will be "King or Kaiser" yet, and the scene ends with him lifting his mother bodily on to the mill-house roof so that she cannot follow him, while he goes off to a neighbouring well-stocked farm to make love to the farmer's daughter. Heredity is already at work.

The next scene is at the betrothal feast at the farm alluded to. Peer goes as a neighbour, uninvited. It is a *mariage de convenance* arranged by the parents. But the bride-elect, Ingrid, will have none of it, and she has locked herself, sulking, in one of the store-rooms of the farm. The bridegroom, somewhat of a booby, goes about stupidly complaining that he cannot get to the bride. Peer Gynt, hearing this, and knowing that Ingrid, from old times, has a flair for him, goes quietly round to the store-room during the drinking and carousing, gets in through the window, and persuades the "bride" to elope with him. They spend the night on the mountains, and then Peer, tired of the adventure, bids Ingrid go back to her parents and behave herself. He has set his heart on little Solveig, a peasant girl whom he has met at the dance. Heredity again? or sheer devilry and egoism!

The second Act is almost wholly composed of fantastic scenes from the folk-lore of the life of the Boyg, the trolls, brownies, and hobgoblins of Norseland, after the manner of similar scenes in the *Midsummer Night's Dream*—fantastic scenes and incidents which serve to throw sidelights on Peer's character. But in the third Act we return to normal everyday life once more, where we find Peer felling trees and building a wooden cottage for himself in the forest. For his crime against Ingrid he has been outlawed, banned to the forest, and deprived

130 *The Ethical and Religious Value of the Drama*

of his inheritance Two scenes make this act remarkable One, where Solveig, the peasant girl, leaving home and a dearly-loved father, mother, and sister, comes and offers herself to Peer, to stand by him, outlawed as he is, in the lonely forest Even Peer Gynt begins to have qualms of conscience Can he, with his past, accept so pure a sacrifice? Can he, "so befouled and disgraced," take so pure a child into his sin-stained life?

" 'It's a holy-day evening' he says
' For me to keep tryst,
Such as now I am, would be sacrilege ' "

The other scene is the death-bed of his mother Peer and his mother have always had a deep love for each other, notwithstanding her scolding tongue As she lies bedridden, waiting for death in her barely-furnished little room, Peer goes to see her He beguiles her last hours with stories of his childhood and from the Norse folk-lore—how they played at sledges together on the floor of the cottage, and how he pretended to drive her to the Castle where the king and the prince had invited them to a feast

"God bless you, ugly old mother,
You were ever a kindly soul!—
Hark how the sledge bells are ringing! "

Then, changing the metaphor

"What say you, Master Saint Peter?
Shall mother not enter in?
You may search a long time, I tell you,
Ere you find such an honest old soul "

Then, in a deep voice, imitating Saint Peter.

"Have done with these jack-in-office airs, sir,
Mother Åse shall enter free."

So he beguiles the hours of pain and waiting, until the shadow of Death crosses the worn face, and he closes the eyes in the last sleep These are great Scenes

The fourth Act opens on the coast of Morocco, in sumptuous hotel grounds, where Peer Gynt is entertaining his friends in royal fashion Years have passed away. Outlawed, he has shaken the dust of his country and people from his feet, and become a "King and Kaiser" of commerce. He is now a handsome, middle-aged gentleman, in an elegant travelling-dress and a gold-rimmed double eye-glass hanging at his waistcoat He has travelled and traded in America, Europe, Africa, and the East The crude instincts of his youth have been slowly moulded into a plastic philosophy of life Instead of Brand's "All for God," his motto is "All for self," both in this world and a possible next, yet always taking care to leave a loophole or a bridge of retreat whenever he gets himself into a tight corner How, for example, has he made his money and become a merchant-prince? By trading, he says,

"In negro slaves for Carolina,
And idol-images for China"

Business is business But in order to silence any qualms of conscience he has exported Bibles—and rum—at a profit, of course, and subscribed liberally to missionary funds For you must know, he says,

"I had begun to age,
Was getting on towards the fifties
And who knows how soon the hour may strike,
The jury-verdict be delivered
That parts the sheep and goats asunder?
What could I do?
A plan I hit on—
I shipped off idols every spring,
Each autumn sent forth missionaries,
Supplying them with all they needed,
As stockings, Bibles, rum, and rice

For every idol that was sold
 They got a coohe well baptised,
 So that the effect was neutralised

* * * * *

Whoso does not do ill, does good,—
 My former errors are forgotten,
 And I, much more than most, can hold
 My misdeeds balanced by my virtues "

What a satire on our commercial religion and civilisation, whence we export idols to the East, and Bibles and spirits to the natives of Africa, and our great armament firms make large profits (with which they help to build churches) out of the export of armaments which, in time of war, may be used to blow our own soldiers to pieces !

The rest of Act IV is taken up with a series of amazing and amusing adventures. Peer is suddenly bereft both of his yacht and a large part of his fortune, and left, stranded and alone, in the Moroccan desert. A band of desert brigands, having got hold of royal but dangerous booty, place at his disposal the emperor's horse, robe, and jewels. In this regalia he is hailed as a prophet by the daughter of a Bedoun chief, Anitra, and her attendant girls. Taking advantage of his new rôle, he attempts a little flirtation with Anitra in which Peer gets decidedly the worst of it. Journeying to Egypt and visiting the Sphinx and other pyramids he meets a Dr. Begriffenfeldt, who, as a result of Peer's conversation with him, conducts him to a large institution in Cairo, which turns out to be an asylum in which the inmates have turned out their keepers. Here—on the principle that in the country of the blind the one-eyed man is king—Peer, the one sane man in a mad-house, with his philosophy of Self-sufficiency, is hailed as emperor, for here indeed, in the realm of the mad,

"Each one shuts himself up in the barrel of self,
In the self-fermentation he dives to the bottom
No one has tears for the other's woes,
No one has mind for the other's ideas"

And the Act ends with Peer Gynt being crowned with a garland of straw as the Kaiser of Self-hood in the Cairo asylum

In the last Act, Peer, now an old man, is on board a vessel off the Norwegian coast, bound for his old home. The evening is stormy, and the vessel is in danger. As the twilight darkens into night a wrecked vessel drifts past them with several men clinging to her, screaming for help. Peer offers liberal rewards to any of the crew who will lower a boat and go to the assistance of the shipwrecked men, but the sailors reply that they have their own wives and children to think of. Peer curses them as chicken-hearted hounds, but he takes care not to risk his own life. It is a fine piece of satire on the so-called "self-sacrifice" of those who, often amid much public applause, fling large gifts to others or contribute liberally to public charities and institutions, and so, while gaining a reputation for charity, get others to do the really dangerous and disagreeable work of the world. Peer, with his doctrine of Self-hood, is so blinded by it that he cannot see that he is condemning himself when he says with fine but unconscious irony

"There is no faith left among men any more—
No Christianity—well may they say it and write it,
Their good deeds are few and their prayers are still fewer,
And they pay no respect for the Powers above them
In a storm like to-night's, He's a terror, the Lord is
One's personal welfare is clean set aside—
One counts but as a sausage in slaughtering-time"

But

"I am no whit to blame, for the sacrifice
I can prove I stood ready, my money in hand."

134 *The Ethical and Religious Value of the Drama*

However, in the deepening storm Peer himself is wrecked, losing everything, and just escaping with his life by thrusting a fellow-voyager off the spar to which he is clinging. He makes his way to the old farm, and thence to the hut he had built in the forest when he was outlawed, and he hears a woman's voice. It is Solveig—now aged like himself—singing

"Dearest boy of mine, far away,
Comest thou soon ?
Is thy burden heavy ?
Take time, take time ,
I will await thee ,
I promised of old "

Peer Gynt, heart-stricken, begins to see light. The very mists, and withered leaves, and winds, and dew-drops, and broken straws of the forest seem to remind him of the life—the feelings, the thoughts, the joys, the purer desires, the unstained heart—*he might have had*. Too late! Death, in the shape of a Button-moulder, comes along, and when Peer inquires of him his business, he tells Peer that he has come from the Master of all to fetch his soul, throw it "into the waste-box," "melt it up," and "merge it in the mass." That is what his egoism, his doctrine of self-sufficiency has brought him to—to be merged in the general mass of raw spiritual material, and perhaps stamped out again, like as two peas to so many millions of other buttons. What a destiny!

"To be oneself [only] is to slay oneself"

The Button-moulder bids him prepare, and set his house in order. Peer is full of terror, but at that moment the door of the hut opens, and the white-haired Solveig appears with psalm-book in her hand, dressed for church. The moment she sees Peer she cries out:

"He is here ! he is here ! Oh, to God be the praise !
Blessed be thou that at last thou hast come !
Blessed, thrice blessed, our Whitsun-morn meeting "

While Peer, crushed to earth by such constancy, cries
in his humiliation

"My mother, my wife, oh, thou innocent woman !
In thy love—oh, there hide me, hide me !"

And Solveig, as she takes him in her arms, sings softly

"Sleep thou, dearest boy of mine !
I will cradle thee, I will watch thee—
Sleep and dream thou, dear my boy !"

And Peer Gynt learns that in seeking the Kingdom of
Self the whole of his life he has missed the Kingdom
of Love.

It is a wonderful drama Like Brand, it helps us, but
it does not solve the problem of self-realisation It helps
us in this way—it shows us that the doctrine of egoism,
of self-sufficiency, is a false and a shallow philosophy
of life—the philosophy of the mad-house where

"Each one shuts himself up in the barrel of self—
No one has tears for the other's woes,
No one has mind for the other's ideas "

Much more truly and certainly "we are members
one of another" Nearly all we are and have comes from
others—mother, father, brothers, sisters, playmates,
school, friends, books, art, music, the social *milieu*, and
the mighty life of Nature Through these the self *grows*,
absorbs spiritual nutrition, develops If it cuts itself
aloof, it dies

But it is just in this power of absorption and growth
that the mystery lies. For what mysterious Power is it
that determines the soul's *capacity* for growth? How

can a feeble-minded or mentally deficient child's self grow, absorb, and develop? Its "self" is rimmed round as with iron bands. And what is it that determines whether a man shall become a Pastor Brand, with his cry, "All for God," or a Peer Gynt, with his motto, "All for Self," or the millions of spiritual types and varieties which sway with varying impulse between the two? Ibsen, in the last Act of the drama, tries to answer this question by making Death, the Button-moulder, say that to be one's best and highest self one must

"Stand forth everywhere

With the Master's intention displayed like a signboard"

PEER "But suppose a man never has come to know

What Master meant with him?"

THE BUTTON-MOULDER "He must divine it"

PEER "But how oft are divinings beside the mark!

Then one's carried *ad undas* in middle career"

"He must divine it!" How can the morally blind, the feeble-minded, the mentally deficient, the pious and conscientious Pharisees, whose inner light is but darkness, divine what is beyond their divination? As Dr Philip H Wicksteed observes in his penetrative interpretation of the play "The Devil has no stauncher ally than *want of perception*" And yet this want of perception besets us all in some measure, for none of us can see the full-orbed Truth. The normal, healthy-minded man can, if he will, see enough by which to guide his life. It is the abnormal, the unhealthy, the spiritually blind, that make the tragic fact. To quote Dr Wicksteed again (for I cannot find better words with which to summarise the meaning of the play)

"What is it to be one's self? God *meant something* when He made each one of us. For a man to embody that something of God, of Spirit, in his words and deeds, and so become in his degree a 'word of God made

flesh,' is to be himself But thus to be himself he must slay himself ('He that would save his life must lose it') That is to say, he must slay the craving to make himself the centre round which others revolve, and must strive to find his true orbit, and swing, self-poised, round the great central light But what if a poor devil can never puzzle out what on earth God *did* mean when he made him? Why, then he must *feel* it But how often your 'feeling' misses fire! Ay! there you have it. The devil has no stauncher ally than *want of perception!*

"But, after all, you may generally find out what God meant you for if you will face facts It is easy to find a refuge from facts in lies, in self-deception, and in self-sufficiency It is easy to take credit to yourself for what circumstances have done for you, and lay upon circumstances what you owe to yourself It is easy to think you are realising yourself by refusing to become 'a pack-horse for the weal and woe of others,' keeping alternatives open and never closing a door behind you, or burning your ships, and so always remaining the master of the situation and self-possessed If you choose to do these easy things you may always 'get round' your difficulties, but you will never get through them You will remain master of the situation indeed, but the situation will become poorer and narrower every day If you never commit yourself, you never express yourself, and your self becomes less and less significant and decisive. Calculating selfishness is the annihilation of self."

We have all, I dare say, come across examples of the truth of those words And yet cynically-minded people will continue to ask the foolish question Which got the most happiness out of life? or which was the greatest power for good to his day and generation—Pastor Brand or Peer Gynt? As though "happiness" and "good" could be measured in terms of material pleasure or

success! But we are all more or less mixtures of the two—sometimes we try to “get round” our moral difficulties, in our better moments we face them and try to get through. Well for us if we have more of the spirit of Pastor Brand than that of Peer Gynt in our spiritual make-up—Pastor Brand, but illumined by the spiritual insight and understanding love of Jesus of Nazareth.

X

TOLSTOI'S "THE POWER OF DARKNESS": NATURE VERSUS NURTURE

WE have seen that Ibsen, in most of his dramas, lays the emphasis on the influence of heredity. That is important. But it is impossible, in the present state of human knowledge, to lay down any rule as to the relative importance of heredity and environment. On the one hand, as I pointed out in the last chapter, nearly all that a man has and is comes to him from outside spiritual sources and forces—mother, father, sisters and brothers, playmates, school, friends, books, art, music, and the life of Nature—all summed up in the word environment. On the other hand, all these, or the most valuable spiritual elements in them, will drift by him unnoticed or unheeded, and certainly unabsorbed or unassimilated, if he is mentally deficient and has not the inner capacity to perceive or to assimilate them. "The Devil's staunchest ally is *want of perception*." That inner capacity, which we call soul or personality, we derive from our ancestry or from God by the law of heredity. Yet Shakespeare, with all his splendid spiritual endowments, would have spent his life to little purpose had he been immured for life in a prison or a coal-mine, or been otherwise shut off from an appropriate environment. On the other hand, a mentally-deficient person, or even an ordinary individual, would never have attained Shakespeare's genius even if he had had ten times the

education and opportunities which Shakespeare had. There is a mystery in personality, and in its powers of spiritual assimilation, which no one can fathom.

If Ibsen emphasises the influence of heredity, Tolstoi emphasises the influence of environment. The title of this play, *The Power of Darkness*, suggests that. And yet the question immediately suggests itself—Darkness of what? Darkness of understanding? "Want of perception?" "If the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness?" Who is responsible for that darkness as we see it in the imbecile, the idiot, and the criminal?

But Tolstoi's treatment of the problem, both in his novels and in his dramas, shows how powerfully he enforces his particular aspect of the truth. There is a spiritual foundation, an original potency, from which, as a basis, we all have to work and build, and we cannot work or build without the necessary spiritual material—the field in which to labour. That is Tolstoi's part of the problem—the field in which we labour, and the spiritual nutrition or material with which we build up our own lives and the life of the community around us. There are indeed three plays of Tolstoi's—as well as several of his novels—which we should read if we would form a true estimate of his religion and philosophy of life, *The Power of Darkness*, *Fruits of Culture*, and *The Light shines in Darkness*. The first illustrates the ignorance and spiritual darkness which surrounds and conditions the life of the peasantry, the second shows the superficiality, the egoism, the false knowledge, in which so many of our so-called intellectual classes live, the third illustrates the clash between this false knowledge, this spiritual darkness, and the light which shines in the Gospels and in the heart of Christlike men.

The Power of Darkness is a sombre play. It is a picture of sordid peasant life—the only characters in

it that appeal to us being the peasant child Nan, Mítritch, the old ex-soldier, and Akím, the old peasant father, who has a simple but deeply religious strain in him. The play opens in the cottage of Peter Ignátitch, a well-to-do peasant who has married for the second time, but who is now sickly and prematurely old. His second wife, Anísya, is much younger than he, fond of dress, and tired of her sickly husband—indeed, she has already entered upon a love-affair with Nikíta, their farm labourer, a selfish and dissolute rake some twenty-five years old. The other inhabitants of the cottage, in addition to Peter, his wife, and Nikíta, are Akoulína, a daughter by the first marriage, and the child Nan, a girl of ten, by the second marriage. Nikíta, the labourer, is the centre of this sombre tragedy. His chief desire in life seems to be the gratification of his egoistic and sexual impulses. He is already looking forward to marriage with Anísya, Peter's wife, as soon as Peter dies. He has also been involved in an *affaire* with a girl in a neighbouring village named Marína, whom he now wishes to desert. Evil thoughts beget evil deeds. Peter, the sick husband, is not dying quickly enough. Some means must be found for getting him out of the way. Matrýona, Nikíta's mother, one of those evil-minded, cunning women, who seem to be capable of any wickedness, and who is anxious to see her son well married—Matrýona brings some powders from the neighbouring town, and persuades Anísya to administer them to her sick husband as medicine. The chief difficulty in the way is that they do not know where Peter has hidden his little fortune. However, the women soon worm the secret out of him. The powders are administered, the sick man dies; and the second Act ends with the hypocritical lamentations of those who have done him to death as they proceed to prepare the corpse for burial.

Some nine months elapse between the second and third

Acts Nikíta and Anísya are now married, and the erstwhile labourer has become the well-to-do peasant. But the marriage has turned out a most unhappy one. Nikíta has taken to drinking, is neglecting the farm, and, worse than all, is involved in another love-affair with Akoulína, his wife's step-daughter and his own step-sister. The atmosphere of the home is heavy with jealousy, scoldings, recriminations, and drunkenness, lit up by the brightness of the innocent-minded little Nan and the sympathy of the old ex-soldier Mítritch, who has been taken on as a labourer. Akím, Nikíta's father, a simple-minded old man who can hardly find words to express himself but who has a deeply religious nature, also visits them. He sees how things are going, and he tries to warn Nikíta against the life he is leading.

"Nikíta," he says, "it's not right in your house—not right . . . I mean, you are living a bad life, Nikíta—bad. I'll go."

They try to persuade him to remain and take tea with them.

"No," he says, "I cannot. You are on the road to ruin . . . I told you about the wrong you did to Marína, the orphan lass. Sin fastens on to sin, drags sin after it, and you've stuck fast, Nikíta—stuck fast in sin . . . I can't drink tea with you, because of your filth. It makes me sick. You're in your riches same as in a net. Ah, Nikíta! it's the soul that God needs."

The old man has really come to his son to borrow money with which to buy a horse for his farm-work, but when he sees how they are living he will not touch their money. "I'll go begging," he says, "before I'll take it. You've forgotten God. Faugh! I'd rather sleep under some fence than in the midst of your filth."

In the fourth Act the sordid and sombre tragedy deepens. Nikíta becomes more deeply involved in drunkenness and vice and in his love-affair with

Akoulína, for whom he and his wife Anísya are trying to arrange a betrothal with the son of a neighbouring farmer. It is purely a marriage of convenience. But a baby, of which Nikita is the father, is born, secretly, and the infant must be disposed of secretly before the betrothal takes place. The women in the house—Matryóna, Nikita's mother, and Anísya, his wife—insist that he must smother and bury it in the cellar. Nikita wants them to send it to the Foundlings' Hospital, where from eighty to ninety per cent of new-born infants die, but they point out that in that case the whole unpleasant affair will become known, and the betrothal prevented. They virtually force Nikita into the cellar with the infant in one arm and a spade in the other. It is a horrible scene. For at the same time little Nan, thought to be asleep, is lying awake in her cot in the living-room, while Mítritch, the old ex-soldier, is trying to get her to sleep and to divert her mind and her persistent questionings from the foul tragedy which is going on around them.

When Nikita comes out of the cellar he is a changed man. He cannot get the whining and whimpering of the infant out of his ears. Though he has crushed it to death and buried it, he believes it is still alive. Like one dazed, he cries

"My own mother! my own mother! I've ruined my life! What have you done with me? Where am I to go?" and he rushes out of the cottage to drown his terror and remorse in drink.

The fifth Act, some weeks later, is the scene of the betrothal feast of Akoulína and her prospective husband. The sounds of singing and music issue from the cottage, and many guests are present, eating and drinking. Nikita comes from the cottage, tired and out of humour with the whole affair. His remorse has told upon him. His marriage with Anísya has been an utter failure.

The money it brought has led him deeper and deeper into ruin. The still darker deeds upon his conscience will not let him rest. Going behind the barn, he picks up a rope with the intention of hanging himself and so ending everything. A conversation with old Mítritch delays his purpose, and his wife, Anísyá, his mother, Matrýona, and the little girl, Nan, come to call him into the cottage, for the bride and bridegroom and all the guests are waiting for the head of the house to give his blessing. At first he refuses to go.

"How can I go?" he says. "How can I take the holy ícón in my hands? How am I to look her in the face?"

But again they come to him. The guests are all waiting, they are asking why the head of the house does not come and give his blessing. Old Mítritch adds his persuasions, and makes the chance remark: "Don't fear men. As soon as you fear men the hoofed one just collars you and pushes you where he likes!"

The remark strikes home.

"You tell me not to fear men!" says Nikíta. "Ah! better so! I will go."

He goes into the cottage, and all the guests are ready to listen to the blessing, and to conclude with drinks and singing. But there is no blessing. A hush falls upon the assembly. Nikíta, the head of the house, is on his knees, making a confession.

"Father, you are here! Look at me! Christian commune! I have sinned, and I wish to confess! Marína, I have sinned towards you. I promised to marry you, I tempted you, and forsook you! Forgive me, in Christ's name! Listen, Christian commune! I'm a fiend, Akoulína. I have sinned against you! Your father died no natural death! He was poisoned. . . Akoulína, I poisoned him! Forgive me, in Christ's name!"

The women try to stop him with screams, and shout

that he is crazy and drivelling with drink. The only person who supports him is Akim, the simple-minded religious old father, who cries

"Speak, my son! Tell everything—you'll feel better! Confess to God, don't fear men! God—God! It is He!"

And Nikita goes on

"I poisoned the father, dog that I am, and I ruined the daughter! She was in my power, and I ruined her, and her baby. I smothered the baby in the cellar. . . And I buried it! I did it, all alone! Don't shield me! I fear no one now! Forgive me, Christian commune!"

POLICE OFFICER—"Bind him! The marriage is evidently off."

NIKITA—"Wait, there's plenty of time!" and as he bows to the ground before his father, he cries "Father, dear father, forgive me too—fiend that I am! You told me from the first, when I took to bad ways, you said then, 'If a claw is caught, the bird is lost!' I would not listen to your words, dog that I was, and it has turned out as you said! Forgive me, for Christ's sake!"

AKIN (*embracing his son*)—"God will forgive you, my son! You have had no mercy on yourself, He will show mercy on you! God—God! It is He!"

And as the police officer arrests and binds Nikita, the play ends

It is a powerful drama, almost too realistic in its sombre setting and in its dark and tragic development. It should be read, as I have said, in conjunction with his other dramas, *Fruits of Culture* and *The Light shines in Darkness*. The one holds up a similar but lighter picture of the futilities of frivolous middle-class society, and the other, a transcript from Tolstoi's own life, shows how difficult it is, even in one's own home, to practise the simple life of Jesus of Nazareth in the midst of

fashionable modern society, and to what tragic clashes and conflicts it gives rise. The same story is told in different form in the novels and short tales which have been circulated throughout Russia and Europe by the hundred thousand. In the character of Levin in *Anna Karénina*, in that of Nekhludoff in *Resurrection*, in that of Pamphilus in *Work while ye have the Light*, and in many of his short stories, the teaching is always the same—that if men would overcome the “Power of Darkness”—the darkness that is within their own minds and in the life and society around them, the darkness of egotism, and lust, and evil desire, and covetousness, and ambition—they must turn to the light within, “the light that lighteth every man that cometh into the world,” the light of an informed conscience and an understanding love, the light of truth and the Gospel as taught in the Sermon on the Mount. Then out of the darkness and the grave of selfish pride and egoism and evil desire there will come a light and a resurrection of the spirit like the resurrection of the new life of spring, out of the frost and darkness of winter—a resurrection to that eternal life which is realised, not in terms of duration or material pleasure, but in and through that life of understanding love which the Apostle Paul describes as “the life which is life indeed.”

Critics of Tolstoi say that he preaches too much, that he spoils his art—his novels and his dramas—by over-weighting them with moral or didactic appeals. There is some truth in that, but we must remember that Tolstoi is no believer in the doctrine of “Art for Art’s sake.” For him Art must be for Life’s sake, and the Art which does not inspire and move men towards purer, deeper, and “more abundant life” is false and decadent Art. There is a beauty of the spirit by which all other beauty must be tested and tried.

There is one of Tolstoi’s characters—that of Levin in

Anna Karénina—which illustrates his philosophy of life so well that it seems like a transcript from Tolstoi's own life. The book is a picture of Russian life and society in its various classes and phases, and Levin, the hero of the book, moving in the highest circles of Russian society, seeing and hearing its talk, its intrigues, its scandals, its ambitions, its anxieties, and its troubles, is also filled with sorrow and perplexity at the part he has to play in the great drama which is going on around him. Science, politics, philanthropy, Art, the Church—he has tried them all, and all fail him and leave him face to face with the mystery of existence, with despair, and with possible suicide. The old questions persistently beset him. What am I? Whence did I come? Why am I here, and what is my duty to God and man? Then one day he is talking with one of his labourers about a neighbouring landed proprietor who has no pity on his peasants and labourers and who treats them like slaves. "Men are not alike," said the peasant in his blunt way. "One man lives for his stomach and another for his soul, for God."

"What do you mean by living for his soul?" asked Levin.

"Why, it's quite simple," said the peasant. "It's to live according to God, according to Truth. All men are not the same, that's certain. You yourself, Konstantin Levin, you couldn't wrong anyone."

Levin turned away, deeply moved. The peasant's words found an echo in his heart, and confused but weighty thoughts arose within him from some hidden source, and filled his soul with their brilliant light. The darkness that had held him was falling away. He felt himself under the sway of a spiritual impulse such as he had never known before.

"Not to live for one's self, but for God! What God? He did not know. He could not define God. No one

could And yet, looking back on the millions of men in all ages, past and present, from peasants to sages—all the best and worthiest had agreed on this point—that we should live for truth, for the good, for the soul, for God” Levin, as he walked along, “looked up at the stars and the Milky Way, listened to the drops of rain falling from the leaves of the trees, heard the thunder rumbling in the distance, and saw the flashes of lightning which periodically lit the sky He felt as though a heavy burden had been lifted from his heart” Behind all the religions, behind all the creeds of the Churches, behind Buddhism, Mohammedanism, Christianity, behind science and evolution, behind Art, and literature, and politics, and all the mighty life of nations, and civilisations, and the ceaseless procession of the generations of men, there lies the simple command Live for truth, for the soul, for God A new feeling took possession of his heart. He went into the house saying “This feeling has stolen into my soul through experience, through suffering I do not know what it means I shall continue to be vexed with my workmen, and shall always be blaming my wife for what annoys me and then repenting at once. I shall always feel a certain barrier between the sanctuary of my inmost soul and the souls of others, even my wife’s I shall continue to pray without being able to explain to myself why, but my inward life has conquered its liberty It will no longer be at the mercy of circumstances, and my whole life, every moment of my life, will be, not meaningless as before, but full of deep meaning, which I shall have power to impress on every action.”

That is Levin in *Anna Karénina*—and it is also Tolstoi himself It is an exact transcript of his own experience of life

The reader will see that the “Power of Darkness” against which Tolstoi struggles and contends is not, as

with Ibsen, an hereditary influence or endowment, it is rather a power due to false teaching, false ideas, a false religion, an evil social system, a vicious environment, all resulting in the evils and cruelties of war, drink, usury, slums, the social evil, the prison system—which simply perpetuate the darkness from generation to generation. Substitute a truer and a more real religion, a truer social system and way of life, and the darkness would be dispelled by the light of Truth and the Gospel, and the evils of war, usury, and capitalism—which is largely a form of covetousness or desire for power—would disappear.

"Man," says Tolstoi, quoting Pascal—"man is but a reed, but he is a *thinking* reed." A vapour, a drop of tainted or poisoned water, is sufficient to kill him. But though the material universe, by pestilence or earthquake, should unite to crush him, man still remains nobler than that which kills him, for he knows that he is dying, but the material universe knows nothing. Thus the distinction and the uniqueness of human personality consists in feeling, consciousness, thought, with all their great qualities and attributes. This higher consciousness is the divine spark within us which enables us to discriminate between good and evil. It belongs to peasant and philosopher alike, and is not dependent on reasoning. To keep our thoughts, our interests, our ideals fixed on the development of this higher part of our nature is to "lay hold on eternal Life," because only this part is eternal. It is the Kingdom of God within us, because it comes from God, it is part of the spirit of God, and the cultivation of it is the rule and *life* of the Kingdom. Here, then, according to Tolstoi, is the answer to the question—"What is the meaning of Life?" It is this. There is a Spiritual Power in the universe from whom I derive my being, my consciousness, and it is this consciousness which enables me to discern what is good.

All that is best in me—my soul, conscience, intelligence, reason, love—flow from that Spiritual Power, and the purpose of my life is to live in accordance with His Will—that is, to do good.

What, then, is the good? A perception of it lies at the root of all the great religions, and especially is it to be found in Buddhism and the great religions of the East, but supremely it is to be found in the Sermon on the Mount, which Tolstoi summarises in the following five points, the observance of which he regards as necessary to the understanding and practise of the good life

(1) Live in peace with all men Treat no one as contemptible or beneath you Do not kill Never get angry—nay, more, do not rest until you have dissipated even unreasonable anger in others against yourself, that is, forgive unto seventy times seven

(2) No libertinage, live chastely, let every man have one wife and every woman one husband, and let them be ever faithful each to the other

(3) "Swear not at all" Never take an oath of service of any kind, either to the Church, or to the State, or to a fellow human being Oaths are incompatible with perfect freedom

(4) Never employ force against the wrong-doer Bear whatever wrong is done to you without seeking to have the wrong-doer punished. Only so can you overcome the evil in his nature.

(5) Renounce all distinctions of nationality Do not admit that men of another nation should ever be treated as enemies Love all men, as akin and alike near to you Do good to all alike

These are the teachings of the Sermon on the Mount They may require some slight qualification, but they are the highest religion known And the way to spread them and make them better known is *to live them*. And if these teachings were observed and adopted

by everyone, says Tolstoi, or even by the majority of the human race, the present state of society would be changed and transformed. Armies and wars would become things of the past, courts of law would give place to the rule of love, and men would prefer to suffer occasionally from wrong-doing rather than live in perpetual anger, suspicion, and hatred of each other. The "Power of Darkness," with all its falsities and selfishnesses would vanish, and the light of understanding love, with its simple truths and sincerities, would take its place. The old religious peasant Akím in the play, with all his stammering and incoherency, stands for that, Mítritch, the old ex-soldier, in his talks to little Nan and to Nikíta, unconsciously stands for it; Nikíta, with all his selfishness and egoism, admits its power when he repents and confesses, yields himself to the police officer, and, fearing not men, but God, sees the Light and turns to the better way.

XI

BERNARD SHAW'S "ANDROCLES AND THE LION" AND THE PROBLEM OF CHRISTIANITY VERSUS MILITARISM

BERNARD SHAW'S comedy, *Androcles and the Lion*, is a short play in two acts covering some forty-five pages. Preceding the play there are over one hundred pages of preface. The preface contains a very searching criticism and commentary on the various New Testament writings—a commentary which will be regarded as exceedingly irreverent by those who have been taught to regard the Bible as an infallible book. Mr Shaw tells us that he is not a Christian in the sense in which the world uses that term, but he says he is ready to admit that, after contemplating the world and human nature for nearly sixty years, he sees "no way out of the world's misery but the way which would have been found by Christ's will if he had undertaken the work of a modern practical statesman." He evidently agrees with Bishop Gore, who recently said that Christendom is not really Christian, and that its professed Christianity is only skin deep. Mr Shaw says that the Christian world seems to prefer the way of Barabbas to the way of Christ—except when it is very sick. And so he opens his preface with the question: Why not give Christianity a trial? This was before, or in, the early stages of the war. He might well re-echo the question now.

To those who are not likely to be shocked by honest

irreverence I would say—read the preface to *Androcles and the Lion*. Not that I entirely agree with Mr. Shaw in his criticism of the New Testament. But we have got into such an artificial way of speaking about the Bible—just as we have got into an artificial way of speaking about Shakespeare, placing these monuments of literature, in elegant bindings, on our drawing-room tables, but seldom reading them or trying to understand and appreciate their teaching—that a breath of honest criticism comes like a refreshing tonic. In any case, Shaw's criticism will help the reader to understand what an immense difference there is between the Christianity of Jesus of Nazareth and the creed-bound and official Christianity of the Churches.

The play itself is pure comedy—comedy impregnated with the most scorching irony and satire. I have little doubt that in a hundred years time or less Bernard Shaw will be regarded as the Aristophanes of our age. It is impossible for me to convey to the reader any adequate idea of the subtly mingled humour, comedy, and irony of this little play. It is said that when it was first performed in Berlin the Crown Prince, who was present, rose and left the house in dudgeon. Unfortunately, says Mr. Shaw, people of the same militarist type in Britain were also unable to appreciate the satire—which one can well believe, for the militarist, and especially the jingoistic, type of mind is very dense sometimes. It actually closed a church at Forest Hill, London, because God was worshipped in the German language. And we all know how, during the war, many people refused to sing German hymns, play German pianos, or eat "German" lentils (grown in Natal)!

However, though I cannot convey to the reader any adequate idea of the mingled humour and satire of the play, perhaps I can emphasise the ethical problem which it raises, and which is going to trouble the minds of men

a great deal during the next generation. The time of the play is fixed in the period of early Christianity, when the Christians were often subjected to fierce and terrible persecution—cast into prisons, sold into slavery, thrown to the lions, or slain by gladiators in the amphitheatres. Mr Shaw takes the old fable of Androcles and the Lion, and uses it for the setting of his play. In the prologue we are introduced to Androcles and his wife. Androcles has been converted to Christianity. He is very patient, forbearing, tender-hearted, always for turning the other cheek to the smiter. He is married, and he is decidedly henpecked. His wife is a termagant and a shrew, and Androcles has little rest from her sharp tongue. As the play opens they are journeying through a wood, and they suddenly come across a sleeping lion, evidently groaning with pain even in its sleep. The shrew stops her nagging, and almost faints away with fear as the lion wakes up. But Androcles, who has a kind of magnetic sympathy with animals of all kinds, approaches the beast and soon perceives that it can hardly move. It holds one paw off the ground and howls with pain. Evidently there is something the matter with its foot. Androcles coaxes and soothes it into quietude, examines the foot, and ultimately extracts a large thorn from it, for which service the lion is so grateful that it begins to pay him alarming attentions, licking his face and hugging him in a rather dangerous embrace. That is the prologue.

In the first Act we meet with Androcles again. It is on one of the roads converging towards Rome. He is marching under arrest with a body of Christians who have been taken prisoners. They are under a guard of Roman soldiers who are conducting them to their doom in the amphitheatre to fight with the gladiators, or to be thrown to the lions, as the Emperor may determine. The dialogue between the Roman centurion and

the Roman captain of the guard, on the one hand, and the Christians, who simply laugh at the Roman soldiers, turn their cheeks to the smiters, and sing their Christian hymns on the march, is very amusing, as when the centurion tells the captain that he must not allow the Christians to sing their hymns on the public roads—it is blasphemy to the gods, but he makes an exception for the hymn "Onward, Christian Soldiers," because, the captain says, they march better when they sing with spirit. The Christians themselves are a mixed lot, embracing very varied types. Spintho, the most selfish and most wretched in the group, has joined them simply because he is looking forward to crowns of glory in the next world as a reward for his coming martyrdom in this. Ferrovius, a giant athlete of enormous strength, has apparently been attracted to the Christians by their sublime courage. Being a strong man, an athlete, he admires courage, but he cannot always discriminate between physical courage and moral courage. He is continually drawn two ways. He likes the Christians. He admires their courage—but when the trumpet of battle sounds he finds it difficult to follow Jesus. Having joined the Christians, he feels that he must control his passions, love his enemies, and turn the other cheek to the smiter. But being, also, a strong, healthy, muscular athlete, rejoicing in his strength, he is continually tempted to exercise his strength, and when he does so, those who feel the weight of his hand simply turn green with fear. The last man he chastised had to be taken to hospital, and Ferrovius was remorsefully praying at his bedside all night. Figuratively, he represents the type of the good militant muscular clergymen, who preach "love your enemies," and "turn the other cheek" on Sundays, and make red-hot patriotic speeches in war-time, trying to be worshippers of Christ and Mars at the same time. Lavinia, the woman prisoner, is the

best of the group. She is obviously the representative of the higher civilisation of the future, if Christian civilisation is to survive. She has arrived at the ethical conviction that true religion and true Christianity mean that she must be true to what she believes to be right simply because, to her, it is right, and not because it may bring a reward either in this world or the next. She represents the type of Christian and conscientious objector who, though all the guns of all the empires in the world are pointed at him, refuses to engage in the work of killing, either indiscriminately, or incidentally and indirectly, men, women, and children by food blockades, aerial bombs, or submarine torpedoes. The Captain of the guard, who falls in love with her, points out that she can easily escape her coming fate by burning a pinch of incense before the altar of one of the gods in one of the pagan temples, and if she cannot burn a pinch of incense as a matter of conviction, she might at least do so as a matter of good taste, to avoid shocking the religious convictions of her fellow-citizens. If she won't do that—well, she will soon be torn limb from limb by the lions in the amphitheatre to amuse a fashionable Roman crowd!

Lavinia simply laughs such arguments to scorn. That he should imagine she can be false to her deepest convictions, and perjure and violate her soul, either through fear of the lions or fear of the opinion of her neighbours, only shows what a coward at heart he really is. And why should she be false to God in order to avoid shocking the religious susceptibilities of those who are prepared to condemn her to a hideous death rather than respect *her* religious convictions. Such a religion, she says, is not worthy of respect!

It is the tragedy of Christ, Pilate, and Caiaphas and Socrates and his judges, over again—all, probably, conscientious men.

"Even if there were no future life," says Lavinia in effect, "or if the future life were one of torment, I should have to obey my conscience just the same. The hand of God is upon me." No pinch of incense for her!

Even the captain is impressed by such faithfulness and courage. But suppose, he retorts, suppose this God for whom you are willing to die does not exist—suppose he is only a figment of the imagination! "Are your Christian fairy stories any truer than our stories about Jupiter and Diana, in which, I may tell you, I believe no more than the Emperor does, or any educated man in Rome?" What then?

What then! Why, goodness me, captain, virtually says Lavinia, cannot you see that when we die for Truth or Right we are dying for something greater than we know? And that is God! If we did know, we should be as gods ourselves. And cannot you see, also, captain, that our courage is greater than yours?—for you soldiers always go on to the field of battle hoping to escape death, and with a *chance* of escape, but there is no escape for us martyrs. And besides, you go to the accompaniment of the cheers of comrades, and drums, and trumpets, while we die amid the jeers of a howling or a fashionable mob. And moreover, we, who die for love, die with our hands clean, while yours, very often, are not—perchance they have smitten little children!

"Lavinia," says the captain, "this Christianity is a craze of yours. A martyr is a fool. Come down to earth. Burn the incense and marry me."

LAVINIA—"Captain, would you marry me if I hauled down the flag in the day of battle and burnt the incense? Sons take after their mothers, you know. Would you like any son of yours to be a coward?"

"By great Diana!" says the captain, strongly moved, "I think I would strangle you if you gave in now!"¹

¹ I have summarised this dialogue.

The place of the second Act is in the corridor near the Emperor's box at the Coliseum—the great amphitheatre at Rome. As the Emperor approaches his box in imperial state, with his obsequious courtiers about him, the entertainment begins. The Christians, who are to be sent into the arena a few at a time, refuse to fight with the gladiators. They make a joke about it. One says he will be the soup for the lions, another says he will be the fish; Ferrovius says he will be the wild boar, Androcles says he will be the mince-pie, Lavinia, that she will be the olive and anchovies, while the centurion says that Spintho, the abjectly selfish one, will act as an emetic. When the Emperor sees that the Christians won't fight he sends for whips and hot irons in order to force them to fight—just as our modern militarists drove some of the Quakers and conscientious objectors insane by ill-usage because they refused to fight! "Idiotic!" as Lord Selborne truly described it.

Then an exciting incident occurs. Ferrovius, the strong and giant-like athlete, at sight of the whips and hot irons, loses control of himself. Forgetting the injunction to "love his enemies" and turn the other cheek, he seizes a sword from one of the gladiators and speedily disposes of six of them, their fragments having to be carried away in baskets. He has no sooner done this than he is filled with remorse. He has betrayed his Master, he says, and he asks that his right hand—the hand that did the deed—shall be cut off, it has offended. The Emperor, however, is so delighted at his prowess that he offers him the laurel crown and a captaincy in the Pretorian Guard. If all the Christians will fight like that, he says, he himself will become a Christian!

Then a new turn in the programme is announced. The gladiators have been withdrawn, and the next batch of Christians must face the lions. Androcles is one of

this group, and as he enters the arena a huge lion, a noble brute, rushes at him with an appalling roar, and knocks him over. Suddenly the lion starts back, hesitates, sniffs at Androcles, purrs, and begins to lick his face. It is our old friend of the forest, from whose foot Androcles had extracted the thorn. It stands on its hind legs, holds out its two fore-paws, which Androcles takes in his hands, and both waltz round the arena. They waltz also into the corridor, whence all the brave captains and guards flee like so many sheep as soon as they see the lion, and the play ends, surely amid universal laughter, by the Emperor, with the fear of the lion in his heart, granting a free pardon to all the Christian prisoners.

The play is obviously an attempt to kill militarism by satire—and if militarism can be killed by satire, surely such a play will kill it. I do not wonder that the Crown Prince of Germany left the theatre during the performance of the play. I hope it will have a different effect upon our own militarists and the militarists of other countries, for we have now surely learnt that it is not only German militarism that needs to be overthrown—it is militarism everywhere. But the play raises one or two very deep and serious ethical and religious problems—such as, for example—Is the terrible evil of war going to be overcome and rooted out of human society by reason and persuasion, by satire, or by force? Can the Satan of militarism cast out the Satan of militarism?—for modern war, even when waged by a League of Nations, means using the weapons of Satan. In other words—Are the Tolstoys, the Gandhis, the Lavinias, the Quakers, the Mennonites, the conscientious objectors of the world—are they the type to which mankind is moving?—the type which says "Our conflicts shall be conflicts of mind, conflicts of reason, not the conflicts of brute force, which tear limb from

limb and poison our lives with bitter hatreds And if you militarists say you will not be content with such peaceful conflicts, but that you will *force* men to fight and tear each other to pieces—why, then, you must shoot us out of hand, for we will not live in such a world " That is the stand which Lavinia makes And undoubtedly Lavinia is a high type of womanhood—acute, penetrating, sane and healthy-minded, far above the shrieking sisterhood which thirsts for other people's blood And there is one thing which is going to help the Tolstoys, the Gandhis, and the Lavinias of the world It is this—that Science, every year, is tending to make war not only more cruel and more deadly—those who trade in war will always find excuses for that—but it is making war more and more dastardly, and healthy-minded men and women don't like to be guilty of dastardly deeds, unworthy of human beings

As a matter of fact, militarism, taking advantage of modern scientific discoveries, has brought mankind to a frightful *impasse* During the great war the young men of every belligerent nation performed deeds of heroism before which there is only one possible attitude among thinking men and women—the attitude of reverential and uncovered silence And yet, on the other hand, deeds were done in and by every army which fill every thinking man and woman, and even the soldiers themselves, with profound shame. That is the *impasse* to which militarism has brought civilisation—that is, it has exploited the natural heroism of the human heart, and harnessed that heroism to a sort of work too frightful to contemplate in cold blood And unless a way out is found that moral *impasse* will become deeper, and civilised mankind, without moral guidance or moral discipline, and giving itself over to anarchy, will go down into the night of savagery and barbarism Poison gas, chemicals, and liquid fire on a large scale, not only over

armies, but over immense civilian areas, guaranteed to kill and wither every living thing within reach; armies of aeroplanes dropping innumerable bombs from the skies, disease germs spread throughout the world by every possible agency, submarine warfare and food blockades maintained to such a point that the children that do manage to be born become soft and tuberculous in bone, and feeble and anæmic in blood and brain—is all this deliberate maiming and destruction of human life, including innocent non-combatants and children, to be the last word in civilisation, not to mention religion? It has become an almost proverbial condemnation of certain types of conduct to compare them to Nero fiddling while Rome burned, but the war-makers of modern civilisation, in every country, are not only prepared to burn Rome, they are preparing to burn and scorate the populations of whole countrysides with chemicals, poison gas, and bombs from above, and then decorate the doers of such deeds with ribbons, garters, medals, crosses, and D S O's, and afterwards proceed unctuously to church to listen to the Sermon on the Mount! No Church and no civilisation can stand with such spiritually drunken hypocrisies to its credit. Is it any wonder that men and women like Tolstoi, and Gandhi, and Lavinia, and the Quakers refuse to have anything to do with such methods, and proclaim their determination to have no part or lot in them, not even at the call of their country, but will rather obey the call of God and leave the world, shot as traitors if a blind or biased court-martial so decides, but with hands and soul clean of the work which modern scientific warfare would impose upon them? There is something in the spirit of man, and especially in the spirit of youth, which responds to the highest. During the war it proved its courage and devotion by going through an inferno of suffering and cruelty at the call of its elders and rulers,

who complacently accepted those terrible sacrifices. But now it sees that there is a higher call—the call of God—the call which says “Know ye not that ye are a temple of God and that the spirit of God dwelleth in you? If any man destroyeth the temple of God, him shall God destroy, for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are.” That is why many of our best youths are saying, “Never again.” Never again—not by imposing a counter-imperialism of our own, but by building up a real and universal commonwealth of nations based on those principles of peace and friendship which all the great religions profess. And if civilisation is to continue, that is the type which is going to survive, for it embodies a higher idea of service, of citizenship, and of life. That is the real determinant of evolution—the spiritual ideal, the spiritual type—for there is a survival of the fittest in ideas as well as in physical forms and organisations.

But we are in this *impasse*—and this brings us to another side of the problem—that no sooner does one nation begin this evil business of war than other nations are almost inevitably drawn into the conflict, and mankind soon finds itself at the old barbarous level of retaliation—“an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.” Still, it takes too sides to make a quarrel, and a civilisation which prides itself on its science, its culture, and its inventive genius might well set itself to cultivate a little pride in the intelligence which would prevent the beginnings of quarrels, or a rational means of settling them when they have begun, instead of shrieking “to the bitter end,” or “the last shilling.” It is useless talking about the prevention of war so long as hatred, selfishness, covetousness, and unrestricted competition are allowed to warp men’s judgments, undermine the natural affections of peoples, and poison human relationships. Economic exploitation, and especially the exploitation which reckons nothing of human suffering or human life,

must cease. What we want is a higher type of gentleman—a type which will refuse to make individual economic profit the aim of life, and which will refuse also, *at any cost*, to take the military oath for the sake of either military, national, territorial, commercial, or racial dominance. That is the work of the schools of the future—to create this higher type of gentleman. As Anatole France said, shortly before he died, to an association of French teachers: "We must banish from our schools all that may induce children to love war and the crimes of war. We must teach hatred of hatred and hatred of war, for war means hatred. The teacher must train the child to love peace and the arts of peace. He must banish from his teaching everything which excites hatred of the foreigner. Even militarist nations contain more victims than criminals, and we must not inflict the punishment of the wicked upon innocent generations. The nations have much to forgive one another. . . . Whether we wish it or not, the hour has struck when we must become citizens of the world or watch our civilisation perish."

Plays like *Androcles and the Lion* will help forward this education in the arts of peace better than hundreds of sermons. Indeed, it is not mere preaching that is going to help much. Men are tired of Sunday professions which directly contradict our weekday practices. Only by the growth and the organisation of intelligence and by the development of the deepest and widest human affections can we effectually overcome the evils of war. And this will take a long time, for selfishness and passion are deeply rooted, and there is much trouble and sorrow and suffering before the world, for men are blind, and their hearts are hardened by long service to Mammon and by the worship of the god of things as they are. But the God of the Kingdom of the Spirit of Truth is always coming into His own for them that love Him. The

Kingdom of the Spirit is like the music of Beethoven. If you listen to the music of Beethoven, says Mr Clutton Brock somewhere, for the sake of getting a profit out of it, you will not hear the music, but if you try to listen to it for itself, for its beauty, for its relation to the beauties of the whole world, its harmonies will begin to steal into your soul. So it is with this yearning for the Kingdom of the Spirit upon earth. It will come in some measure, though not yet in full measure, to all of us in so far as we live in its spirit, because its spirit will insensibly move us to a deeper and a wider love, embracing all that is capable of loveliness and beauty within its affectional and humanising influence.

XII

BERNARD SHAW'S "METABIOLOGICAL" PLAYS

Up to about his fiftieth year Bernard Shaw apparently looked forward to an educated democracy to bring about a socialistic state of society, and no man in England, save perhaps Mr Sidney Webb, did more towards the political and economic education of democracy than Mr Shaw. He placed his leisure and his brilliant intellectual gifts almost unreservedly at the disposal of the Fabian Society, and the policy and work of that society was largely shaped by him, in collaboration with Sidney Webb, Graham Wallas, Edward R. Pease, and a few others.

Then, about the year 1906, or perhaps a little before that, an important change seems to have come over Mr Shaw's mind. In that year he published *Man and Superman*, which he described as "a Comedy and a Philosophy." "It might have been called a religion as well," he says, "for the vision of Hell in the third act is expressly intended to be a revelation of the modern religion of evolution . . . a new Book of Genesis for the Bible of the Evolutionists."

"A new Book of Genesis!" That is, Shaw's mind has changed from the hope and ideal of economic and political education to that of biology and creative evolution. Perhaps it is a change of emphasis only. In any case, the change is there, and it is an important one. Again and again he returns to this question of

education, and shows his contempt for it—at least, as ordinarily understood. There is a trenchant passage on schools in the preface to *Misalliance*, and in the preface to *Back to Methuselah* he asks the question directly, “Is there any hope in Education?” and answers it in this way

“The usual answer is that we must educate our masters—that is, ourselves. We must teach citizenship and political science at school. But must we? There is no ‘must’ about it, the hard fact being that we must *not* teach political science or citizenship at school. The schoolmaster who attempted it would soon find himself penniless in the streets without pupils, if not in the dock pleading to a pompously worded indictment for sedition against the exploiters. Our schools teach the morality of feudalism corrupted by commercialism, and hold up the military conqueror, the robber baron, and the profiteer as models of the illustrious and the successful. In vain do the prophets who see through this imposture preach and teach a better gospel, the individuals whom they convert are doomed to pass away in a few years, and the new generations are dragged back in the schools to the morality of the fifteenth century, and think themselves Liberal when they are defending the ideas of Henry VII, and gentlemanly when they are opposing to them the ideas of Richard III. Thus the educated man is a greater nuisance than the uneducated one—indeed, it is the inefficiency and sham of the educational side of our schools (to which, except under compulsion, children would not be sent by their parents at all if they did not act as prisons in which the immature are kept from worrying the mature) that save us from being dashed on the rocks of false doctrine instead of drifting down the mid-stream of mere ignorance. There is no way out through the schoolmaster. In truth, mankind can-

not be saved from without, by schoolmasters or any other sort of masters "

" Mankind cannot be saved from without "—that is, it can only be saved from within—as the theologians would say, by being " born again," by spiritual regeneration , or, as Shaw would say, by creative evolution, by breeding a better and worthier type of humanity Hence his phrases " a new Book of Genesis," " the Bible of Creative Evolution," " a Metabiological Pentateuch " We bestow immense pains and labour and wealth on breeding the best types and specimens of plants and animals, but the human type we allow to breed anyhow, in conditions which are a disgrace to religion and civilisation, and in such numbers that the decadent, the inefficient, and the feeble-minded threaten to endanger society, or to become an unbearable burden on the healthier portion of the community

Henceforth then, Shaw, at a white heat of indignation and with burning and scarifying satire, set himself to paint our civilisation in language and images worthy of Swift or Voltaire His play, *Heartbreak House*, and the preface to it, show to what a state modern commerce, society, education, and religion have brought us With a large part of the upper classes, headed by Royalty, devoting themselves to horse-racing, dogs, pigeons, and the shooting of game, while a select few dabble in the futilities of art and culture , with a middle-class given over to profit-making and the glorification of commercial instincts, or professional etiquette, and intellectual vanity and snobbery , and with an artisan, a shop-keeping, and a clerkly class which runs riot over football matches and races, which finds its chief sensations in betting and gambling, and which returns its favourite politicians to Parliament by record majorities so long as they appeal to its most clamorous and pugilistic instincts (Horatio Bottomley to wit!)—such a society

and civilisation, says Shaw, is hopeless "It rhapsodises about love, but believes in cruelty" It bestows honours upon its warriors and academic dignities upon its vivisectioners Not knowing how to live, "all that was left to it was the boast that at least it knew how to die a melancholy accomplishment which the outbreak of war presently gave it unlimited opportunities of displaying Thus were the first-born of Heartbreak House smitten, and the young, the innocent, the hopeful expiated the folly and worthlessness of their elders"

It is such a society and civilisation against which Shaw launches his terrific indictment in the third Act of *Man and Superman* No more scathing satire and invective against modern civilisation has ever been written than the scene in Hell It is impossible to summarise, but I must make one quotation Though the words are addressed to the Devil and his friends by Don Juan, Shaw obviously intends them as a description of the inferno into which civilisation has drifted

"Why," he makes Don Juan say—"why should I be civil to you or to your friends who are drifting with your want of will instead of doing their own—working for a wider, deeper, intenser self-consciousness and clearer self-understanding? In this Palace of Lies a truth or two will not hurt you Your friends are all the dullest dogs I know They are not beautiful they are only decorated. They are not clean they are only shaved and starched. They are not dignified they are only fashionably dressed They are not educated they are only college passmen. They are not religious they are only pewrenters They are not moral they are only conventional They are not virtuous they are only cowardly They are not vicious they are only 'frail' They are not artistic they are only lascivious They are not prosperous they are only rich. They are not loyal ·

they are only servile, not dutiful, only sheepish, not public-spirited, only patriotic, not courageous, only quarrelsome, not determined, only obstinate, not masterful, only domineering, not self-controlled, only obtuse, not self-respecting, only vain, not kind, only sentimental, not social, only gregarious, not considerate, only polite, not intelligent, only opinionated, not progressive, only factious, not imaginative, only superstitious, not just, only vindictive, not generous, only propitiatory, not disciplined, only cowed, and not truthful at all—liars every one of them, to the very backbone of their souls" Hence, Hell to Mr Shaw has become a more endurable place than the Earth, and a more interesting place than the humdrum Heaven which the inhabitants of Earth have been taught to look forward to as their eternal spiritual abode

With such a civilisation—a civilisation which culminated in the great war—no wonder that Mr Shaw, with the eugenists, urges us to give more attention to creative evolution and to the breeding of a finer race. The war and its results evidently deepened Mr Shaw's convictions on the subject, with the result that he produced his great play, *Back to Methuselah*. He calls this play a "Metabiological Pentateuch," and divides it into five parts, after the manner of the five books of the Law. It would be impossible for me to give here a detailed account of these five parts of this new Pentateuch. I need only indicate those points which illustrate his philosophy of life.

The first part is undoubtedly the best. It is called "In the beginning," and is divided into two Acts. The first Act is laid in the Garden of Eden. The characters are, of course, Adam, Eve, and the Serpent. Adam and Eve are very innocent and childlike. The Serpent (who talks, of course) imparts to them, in a delightful dialogue, the fruit of the tree of knowledge—that is, the knowledge

and meaning of the great words, Life, Birth, Death, Hope, Fear, Love, Sin, Immortality, Husband, Wife, Desire, Imagination, Creation. And the meaning also of the two questions, "Why?" and "Why Not?" the one, Why?, being the question of all the conservatives and reactionaries since the world began, while the other, Why not?, has been at the back of every heresy and reform the world has seen. Why not? That is the question of the men and women who dare. With the imparting of the meaning of the word "Creation" to Eve the first Act ends.

The second Act takes place a few centuries later in an oasis in Mesopotamia. Adam and Eve are still alive. All the characters—Adam, Eve, Cain, the Serpent—now become types. Adam, as the second Act opens, is digging and tilling the ground in the sweat of his brow. Eve sits in the shadow of a tree, near a log hut, spinning flax. They have had children and children's children, several generations of them, for they have been condemned to live and to labour for a thousand years. As they work, in strides Cain, their son, equipped with huge spear and brass-bound shield, the first militarist, the first murderer. The conversation turns on this. Cain addresses his father Adam in this style:

"Well, old father of everybody! Still digging? Always dig, dig, dig. Sticking in the old furrow. No progress, no advanced ideas, no adventures."

To which Adam replies:

"What are you now, with your shield and your spear, and your brother's blood crying from the ground against you?"

CAIN—"I am the first murderer. you are only the first man. Anybody could be the first man. it is as easy as to be the first cabbage. To be the first murderer one must be a man of spirit. . . Am I not better than you? Stronger, happier, freer? . . I have striven

with a boar and with a lion as to which of us should kill the other I have striven with a man spear to spear, and shield to shield It is terrible, but there is no joy like it I call it fighting He who has never fought has never lived That is what has brought me to my mother to-day "

ADAM — "What have you to do with one another now ? She is the creator, you the destroyer "

CAIN — "How can I destroy unless she creates ? I want her to create more and more men—ay, and more and more women, that they may in turn create more and more men . Then I will divide them into two great hosts One of them I will lead , and the other will be led by the man I fear most, and whom I desire to fight and kill most And each host shall try to kill the other host Think of that ! All those multitudes of men fighting, fighting, killing, killing ! The four rivers running with blood ! The shouts of triumph ! The howls of rage ! The curses of despair ! The shrieks of torment ! That will be life indeed life lived to the very marrow burning, overwhelming life "

Thus speaks Cain, the fighter

Then Eve chimes in with the woman's point of view Where does she come in, in all this fighting and killing and burning and starvation ?

"Am I to be a mere convenience to make men for you to kill ? " she asks

Cain mentions his wife Lua, dressed in sable and ermine—the fruits of his victories

"What ! " says Eve "You dare to come here boasting about that good-for-nothing Lua, the worst of daughters and the worst of wives ! You, her master ! Fool ! you are more her slave than your own sheep-dog She makes you fight because you bring her the ornaments and the treasures of those you have slain, and because she is courted and propitiated with power

and gold by the people who fear you I spin and keep house, and bear and rear children, and am a woman and not a pet animal to please men and prey on them ! What are you, you poor slave of a painted face and a bundle of skunk's fur ? You were a man-child when I bore you Lua was a woman-child when I bore her What have you made of yourselves ? ”

CAIN (*twirling his moustache*) —“ There is something higher than man There is hero and superman ”

EVE —“ Superman ! You are no superman you are Anti-man you are to other men what a stoat is to the rabbit, and she is to you what the leech is to the stoat You despise your father, but when he dies the world will be the richer because he lived When you die men will say ‘ He was a great warrior, but it would have been better for the world if he had never been born ’ And of Lua they will say nothing, but when they think of her they will spit ”

CAIN —“ She is a better sort of woman to live with than you If Lua nagged at me as you are nagging, and as you nag at Adam, I would beat her black and blue from head to foot I have done it too, slave as you say I am ”

EVE.—“ Yes, because she looked at another man And then you grovelled at her feet, and cried, and begged her to forgive you, and were ten times more her slave than ever Love ! you call that love ! You cannot love Lua till her face is painted ! . . . You will not raise your head to look at all the miracles of life that surround you, but you will run ten miles to see a fight or a death ”

Cain taunts her with the monotony of their life—digging and spinning, digging and spinning It is a life for human oxen, and dogs, and asses He has a plan !—conquer other peoples—make them work for us—then we can live as gods and make life glorious for

ourselves "He who bears the brand of Cain shall rule the earth"

"Poor fool!" says Eve "Your father is a fool skin deep, but you are a fool to the very marrow, and your baggage of a wife is worse." Life monotonous! Yes, because you haven't the brains to make it interesting and creative. You men ought to have been made to share in the pains of creation and labour with women, then you'd have known the value of a created life and the imbecility which leads men to destroy it. Instead of that you dress up your terror-ridden life with fine words, and your pampered and disease-ridden body with fine clothes, so that men may glorify you and honour you as a murderer and a thief. But I live in hope. All my children shall not be diggers and fighters. I will create others.¹ There are some already who dream beautiful dreams, and "the serpent said that every dream could be willed into creation by those strong enough to believe in it. There are others who cut reeds of different lengths and blow through them, making lovely patterns of sound in the air, and some of them can weave the patterns together, sounding three reeds at the same time, and raising my soul to things for which I have no words. And others make little mammoths out of clay, or make faces appear on flat stones, and ask me to create women for them with such faces. I have watched those faces and willed; and then I have made a woman-child that has grown up quite like them. And others think of numbers without having to count on their fingers, and watch the sky at night, and give names to the stars, and can foretell when the sun will be covered with a black saucepan-lid. And there is Tubal, who made this wheel for me which has saved me so much labour. And there is Enoch, who walks on the hills, and hears the Voice continually, and

¹ I have summarised Eve's speeches here.

has given up his will to do the will of the Voice, and has some of the Voice's greatness. When they come there is always some new wonder, or some new hope something to live for. They never want to die, because they are always learning and always creating either things or wisdom, or at least dreaming of them. And then you, Cain, come to me with your stupid fighting and destroying, and your foolish boasting, and you want me to tell you that it is all splendid, and that you are heroic, and that nothing but death or the dread of death makes life worth living. Away with you, naughty child! And do you, Adam, go on with your work and not waste your time listening to him. Through him and his like, death is gaining on life. Already most of our grandchildren die before they have sense enough to know how to live. But man need not always live by bread alone. There is something else. We do not yet know what it is, but some day we shall find out, and then we will live on that alone, and there shall be no more digging nor spinning, nor fighting nor killing."

And there the first part of the play ends, with Eve resignedly resuming her spinning and Adam his digging. That sentence of Eve's, "Already most of our children die before they have sense enough to know how to live," is the keynote to the other four parts of the play. We all know that when we have attained our fifty or sixty years of life we are just beginning to know what wisdom means, and that we should have lived our lives very differently had we known in youth what we know now. Experience, as we all know, is the best teacher, but its results often come too late to be of much use. And even the accumulated result of experience known to the wise does not bring wisdom to the many. For thousands of years our greatest religious teachers, Buddha and Jesus Christ, have pointed out the way of peace and wisdom, but no sooner does hatred get the upper hand and the

Cains of the world get into power than the mind and heart of humanity is poisoned, and the wisdom-teachings both of ancients and moderns, from Buddha's Seven-fold Path and Christ's Sermon on the Mount to the warnings of our modern prophets, are thrown aside, and the great business of killing is glorified even in the Churches and the theatres!

Mr Shaw sees this as clearly as anyone. He sees that both creative science and religion are helpless as soon as war breaks out—nay, that they are both turned out of their course and harnessed on the side of war to make it more destructive, more cruel, more romantic, more "holy." And so the only remedy is to breed a race of men and women who can live long enough to attain wisdom, the wisdom of creativeness, not the folly of destruction, and compared with whom present humanity will be as the Hottentots and Bushmen are to us.

On this line the play proceeds. I have not space even to summarise the other four parts or books. The problem is—to produce this new race of men and women, with the wisdom to *know* how to turn life's gifts to higher and creative purposes. That is, life must be prolonged to such an age that we can learn to live in peace and in creative wisdom, and not as mere quarrelling and fighting children or savages, ignorant of the sacredness of life and of the blood we spill, ignorant also, as even our statesmen are, how to use the tremendous powers which science has placed in our hands. Hence, *Back to Methuselah*—who, according to the legend, lived 969 years—an age at which men will surely be too wise to kill each other and too decent-minded to egg others on to kill each other. Three-score years and ten may be long enough for a very crude and tedious sort of village life, but not long enough for a complicated civilisation like ours. We must study biology, and psychology, and the mystery of desire.

In the second and third parts of the play the secret is discovered by two biologists—the brothers Barnabas. The statesmen get hold of it, and the ensuing complications give Mr Shaw an opportunity of showing his withering contempt for the platitudes and banalities with which our politicians and statesmen fool their foolish electorates. The point of the discussion, however, is that with our short span of seventy years we haven't time, or we don't think it worth while, to do anything really well, whereas if we lived three hundred years we should soon make the world a tolerable place to live in, on the same principle that if you hire a house for a few months you do not think it worth while to spend much thought or money upon it, but if you take it on a lease for ninety-nine years you set yourself to make it as comfortable and cosy as you can. The same with matrimony. If you are faced with the prospect of having to live three hundred years with one particular man or one particular woman, you are naturally likely to be much more careful in your choice. However, in the next book of the *Pentateuch*, or the next section of the play, "The Thing Happens" It is the year 2170, and the chief characters, easily recognisable as reincarnations of Mr Lloyd George and Mrs Asquith, have hit upon the famous biological secret of the brothers Barnabas—that is, they have managed to live until they are nearly three hundred years old. In Part IV—in the year 3000—the new race has come. It easily outdistances the short-lived specimens which still manage to survive, and there is much humour and satire in the description of the worship of the great god Humbug, which is set up in one of the temples to meet the childish social, political, and religious needs of the surviving descendants of the twentieth century!

The last part of the play, Part V, is entitled "As far as Thought can reach" The action takes place in

the year 31920 The race has so far progressed that it has reached the ideal of health, grace, strength, and beauty—the goal of physical evolution on earth The youth are in their prime at three hundred, the old attain the age of Methuselah Not only that, they have learnt new methods of bringing humans to birth, methods by which all the troubles and shortcomings of infancy are overcome before birth, just as—as every student of evolution knows—the child in its pre-natal state passes, in its growth and development, through all the various stages of evolution of past ages A huge egg is carried on to the stage, and presently, inside the egg, there is heard a kicking and yelling, and the cry “Let me be born! let me be born!” A she-ancient, some seven hundred years old, dressed in a ceremonial robe, comes in with a saw and, with much ceremony and to the sound of music, splits open the egg, and there emerges a lively young person, fresh and rosy, with shreds of albumen still clinging to her, and with all the strength, grace, and agility of a young person of seventeen or eighteen summers Every minute she grows visibly in intelligence before our eyes, for, as she says, “the inside of my head is changing very rapidly” Such trifling and troublesome stages of life as love, courtship, and marriage occupy only the first four years of existence, after which the human being settles down to the more solemn and serious business of life Disease and poverty, slums and stock-exchanges, prisons and law courts, and all their brood have vanished Art, beauty, music, philosophy, fellowship are the aim and inspiration of Life And yet the new race is not satisfied It hungers for an answer to the eternal questions “Why? Whence? Whither?” and the play ends with the ghost of Lilith, the legendary mother of the race, looking back upon the eternal passing of the generations of men, and soliloquising in this fashion

"Is this enough, or shall I labour again? I had patience with them for many ages they tried me very sorely They did terrible things, they embraced death, and said that eternal life was a fable I stood amazed at the malice and destructiveness of the things I had made Mars blushed as he looked down on the shame of his sister planet cruelty and hypocrisy became so hideous that the face of the earth was pitted with the graves of little children, among which living skeletons crawled in search of horrible food But they have redeemed themselves from their vileness, and turned away from their sins Best of all, they are still not satisfied they still live by faith and hope After passing a million goals they press on to the goal of redemption from the flesh, to the vortex freed from matter, to the whirlpool in pure intelligence, that, when the world began, was a whirlpool in pure force I can wait waiting and patience mean nothing to the eternal I can wait until they have forded this last stream that lies between flesh and spirit, and disentangled their life from the matter that has always mocked it I am Lilith. I brought life into the whirlpool of force, and compelled my enemy, Matter, to obey a living soul . And because these infants that call themselves ancients are reaching out towards that, I will have patience with them still . . . Of Life only is there no end, and though of its million starry mansions many are empty and many still unbuilt, and though its vast domain is as yet unbearably desert, my seed shall one day fill it and master its matter to its uttermost confines And for what may be beyond, the eyesight of Lilith is too short. It is enough that there is a beyond"

Lilith vanishes, and there the play ends.

What is the meaning of this extraordinary drama? As a play for the stage, in its entirety, it seems to me

impossible. But the first and last parts are very beautiful and have already been staged. As a piece of literature it will rank with the work of Molière and Dean Swift. Mr Shaw, evidently, has been wrought to indignation by the cruelty of the War and the fatuity of the Peace. He sees European civilisation rushing down a steep incline, and so he tries, by bitter irony and scalding satire, to lash mankind out of its follies and its cruelties, its humbugs and its hypocrisies, its lies and its pretences. Just as Dean Swift, stung almost to madness by the cruelties and hypocrisies of his day, wrote his stories of the Lilliputians, the Yahoos, and the Houyhnhnms, in order to satirise the follies of mankind, so Bernard Shaw writes this new *Pentateuch* on the ruins of the old theology in order to force home the fact that in its social and commercial system, in its scientific laboratories, and especially in its powers of destruction, mankind has descended to such depths of imbecility and cruelty that unless it can find some way of purifying its desires and perfecting its powers of intelligent and sympathetic co-operation for creative and constructive purposes, civilisation might as well put up its shutters and say its prayers. The play will live as literature because it is based on honesty, courage, and truth. Let us have done, it virtually says, with cant and make-believe. Truth, and the courage to live the Truth, will make you free. Let your Mammonite and militarist gods go the way of Molech and Baal. Live the life, and more abundant life will come to you. Put more into the bank of social welfare than you draw out of it. Gain high desire—not the vulgar desire of heaping golden counters together in order to gain economic power over the lives of others, but the desire to live in the service and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit of Truth, Beauty, and Love. Then you will find Life worth living and ever moving on to greater things.

"I am of opinion," says Mr Shaw in a passage which sums up his philosophy of life—"I am of opinion that my life belongs to the whole community, and as long as I live it is my privilege to do for it whatsoever I can. I want to be thoroughly used up when I die, for the harder I work, the more I live. I rejoice in life for its own sake. Life is no brief candle for me. It is a sort of splendid torch which I have got hold of for the moment, and I want to make it burn as brightly as possible before handing it on to future generations."

All the best characters in *Man and Superman* and in *Back to Methuselah*—and indeed in the whole of Shaw's plays—preach the same doctrine. It is a religious doctrine—the teaching of Jesus of Nazareth, a cry for "more abundant life."

XIII

BERNARD SHAW'S "SAINT JOAN"

It is part of the tragedy of human life that the generation which commits a great crime seldom realises, until too late, the nature of the deed it is committing. It goes on with its horrible work, with the name of God upon its lips, piously believing that it is engaged in a sacred political or religious "duty." Socrates, Jesus of Nazareth, John Hus, Joan of Arc, Servetus, Bruno, Savonarola, and Heaven only knows how many more—all have perished through this almost inconceivable blindness. "Ye build the sepulchres of the prophets, and garnish the tombs of the righteous, and say, If we had been in the days of our fathers, we should not have been partakers with them in the blood of the prophets." Yet nearly every generation tells the same story. We English people have, I fancy, long since put on sackcloth and ashes for the part we played in those miserable episodes which culminated in the martyrdom of Joan of Arc. Yet how often since have we been guilty of the same blindness!—in Puritan and Cavalier England, in Chartist and pre-Chartist England, in Ireland, in India. And every other nation must plead to the same indictment. It is part of the tragedy of life, the penalty of spiritual progress, the "want of perception which is the Devil's strongest ally."

The story of Joan of Arc is so well known that I need not dwell upon it in detail. She was born of good peasant

parentage in the village of Domrémy in the year 1412. Her upbringing was very similar to that of most peasant children of the time. "My father and mother held me in great subjection," she said. Whatever slight bookish education she received would be at her mother's knee in the shape of the prayers and the creeds of the Catholic Church. Her practical education was of the domestic and peasant type. She helped with the sheep and cattle, hoed and worked in the fields, and did what was needful about the house. "She was modest, simple, devout," said a neighbouring peasant who knew her. "She went gladly to church and to sacred places. She was such that, in a way of speaking, all the people of Domrémy were fond of her." "There was not a better girl in the village round about," says another. Her little friend Hauviette wept sorely when Joan left Domrémy, "she loved her so much for her goodness."

Then, when about the age of thirteen, a strange thing happened. She became what is now called clairvoyant. She began to see visions and to hear mysterious voices. The first of these strange experiences occurred to her after some village sports in which Joan had joined with other girls in the common meadow. When the sports were over and she had returned home, a brilliant cloud seemed to pass before her eyes, and from the cloud there came a voice saying "that she must change her course of life, and do marvellous deeds, for the King of Heaven had chosen her to aid the King of France. She must wear man's dress, take up arms, be a captain in war, and all would be ordered by her advice." Joan was stupefied and incredulous, but the visions continued. At the time she spoke of them to none. Later, she described them very simply to her judges at her trial, saying that she rarely heard the voice without seeing a light. These visions and voices went on for a long time, occurring sometimes twice or thrice a week. The

voices were from three personages, she afterwards said at her trial. One was St Catherine, another St Margaret, and another the archangel Michael. "I saw them with my bodily eyes," said Joan, "as clearly as I see you, and when they departed I used to weep, and wish that they would take me with them."

From the time of seeing the visions and hearing the voices Joan became more devout. But she retained her common sense. She was not a religious fanatic. For three or four years she resisted the influence of her visions and voices, saying "I am a poor girl, who cannot ride or be a leader in war."

This went on until Joan reached her seventeenth year, when the voices became more insistent, telling her that she must begin her divine mission by leading the French forces for the relief of Orleans, then being besieged by the English army. "She would rather have been torn to pieces by horses," she said, than attempt such a task if she had not been sure that the command was of God. The practical difficulties in the way were enormous. She must first obtain the favour and consent of the Dauphin, the claimant to the throne. He was four hundred and fifty miles away in one of his castles by the Loire. No easy task, through a country infested by marauding bands. Her father, too, had said to her brothers that if Joan took to a military life they must drown her. The voices persisted, however. The tenor of their message was always the same—she must drive the English army from Orleans, then she must lead the Dauphin to be crowned at Rheims. These were her first messages, and—she did these things, a girl of seventeen!

Let us not be too dogmatic or sceptical about Joan's visions and voices. These things are mysteries. Clairvoyance is still a mystery. In any case, let us remember that some of the greatest men and women have been led by visions and voices. Socrates had his familiar

spirit or *daemon*, St Paul had his visions and voices, Mahomet, Martin Luther, and Savonarola the same. And these men, as we know, helped to change the face of the world.

At Tours a suit of white armour and a grey charger were provided for her. Her influence on the soldiers was remarkable. Hers was to be a holy war, and she enforced discipline by religion, making the rough soldiers ashamed of coarse behaviour or profane speech. Like General Gordon, she killed no one. On the contrary, she was most gentle and pitiful towards any of the enemy who fell wounded near her. She must have had great strength as well as great gentleness, for she frequently bore her weight of armour for days together. Three times she summoned the English hosts to depart in peace from Orleans, but they shouted back across the river, "Milkmaid," and threatened to burn her as a witch if they caught her. Her presence on her grey charger, in white armour, standard in hand, seemed to give new courage and enthusiasm to the French soldiers, and to strike awe into the besiegers. Fort after fort was taken and the besiegers driven back, until, on the fall of the last fort, they fled, and Joan knelt weeping and praying for the souls of her enemies. She had kept her word. Orleans was delivered. "Within less than a week," says Mr Andrew Lang, "this girl of seventeen had done what Wolfe did on the heights of Abraham, and what Bruce did at Bannockburn—she had gained one of the fifteen decisive battles of the world." Within a few weeks victory succeeded victory, the invaders retiring demoralised from town after town and citadel after citadel until the road was clear to Rheims. There the coronation of Charles took place with great rejoicings, Joan standing next to the King with her standard in her hand. Of her subsequent capture, trial, and death, we shall read as we pursue Mr Shaw's drama. Mr.

Shaw is not always true to historical detail—with the necessity for compression he could hardly be so

The first three scenes carry us to the point at which we have now arrived. Joan has secured her escort from the military commander, Robert de Baudricourt. With it she has travelled to Chinon, gained an audience with the Dauphin, whom, according to Shaw, she addresses as Charlie, and there wins his assent to her taking command of the army, as a last hope of winning Orleans. Dunois, the commander in charge of the relieving army, is waiting for a favourable wind to take his rafts and his men up the River Loire in order to attack the English forts in the rear. Fortunately, the wind changes as Joan talks to Dunois and tells him of her plans, and together they go to lead the attack on the forts. There the third scene ends. Mr Shaw, like every great dramatist, puts something of his own spirit and personality into his characters. Joan speaks with a country accent, as is natural to a peasant girl, and is endowed with sound common sense. With his contempt for romanticism Mr Shaw makes her address the Dauphin, the Archbishop, the Lord Chamberlain, and the other courtiers as comrades and equals rather than as high and mighty personages.

The fourth scene is in the English camp, where an interview takes place between the Earl of Warwick, the English commander, and the Rev John de Stogumber, the chaplain, on the one side, and Cauchon, the Bishop of Beauvais, on the other. In this scene we see the combination of political and ecclesiastical influences which, ultimately, are to prove the undoing of the maid. Joan is a patriot and a nationalist, therefore, to the English commander, a dangerous rebel. He would burn her out of hand as a witch. But Joan is also a devout religious person who follows what she believes to be the voice of God in the soul; therefore, to the Catholic Bishop

she is a dangerous heretic who will not submit to the guidance of the Church. Heresy must be put down with a strong hand, only, the girl, if she is captured, must have a fair trial before the ecclesiastical court, and be given an opportunity of coming back into the fold of the Mother Church.

The dialogue here is very penetrating, for Shaw presents these men as types of their age and not merely as historical personages. Shaw's Warwick sees clearly that if Joan's nationalism and patriotism are allowed to triumph feudalism is doomed. And the Catholic Bishop sees that if Joan's Voices and like heresies are allowed to flourish the Catholic Church is doomed. To Warwick, the statesman, the Catholic Church is secondary. To Cauchon, the ecclesiastic, the feudal aristocracy is secondary. To de Stogumber, the chaplain, with his brutal and blundering loyalty to Church and King, Joan is a rebel, and that is enough for him. "Let her perish. Let her burn," he says, and between them they are going to bring Joan into sore straits.

In scene v we are in the cathedral at Rheims just after the coronation. History moves rapidly here. Already, divided counsels are at work. Joan wishes to push on to Compiègne and Paris, and drive the English forces out of the country. Charles is for temporising and making a treaty. Joan, unused to the intrigues of diplomatists and statesmen, denounces them all, and falls back on her Voices. "Do you think you can frighten me by telling me that I am alone. France is alone, and God is alone, and what is my loneliness before the loneliness of my country and my God? I see now that the loneliness of God is His strength. What would He be if He listened to your jealous little counsels? Well, my loneliness shall be my strength too. It is better to be alone with God. His friendship will not fail me, nor His counsel, nor His love. In His

strength I will dare, and dare, and dare, until I die I will go out now to the common people, and let the love in their eyes comfort me for the hate in yours. You will all be glad to see me burnt, but if I go through the fire I shall go through it to their hearts for ever and ever And so, God be with me ! ”

Joan leaves them to their devices and intrigues, and there the scene ends

The last and greatest scene is the Trial Scene at Rouen Nearly a year has passed away The intriguers have triumphed Joan has been captured by a party of Burgundians who are in secret communication with the English commander, and has been handed over by them for a consideration The Earl of Warwick, in his turn, has handed her over to the Court of the Holy Inquisition, feeling that she is pretty sure to meet her doom But the Court does not move quickly enough to Warwick's liking The ecclesiastical authorities, on the other hand, are determined that Joan shall have a fair trial Indeed, both the Bishop, who presides over the Court, and Lemaître the Inquisitor, who also acts as judge, declare that if they can win back the maid to the fold of the Church and convince her of the error of her ways they will gladly do so. Warwick, and especially the chaplain, de Stogumber, are furious They are determined that Joan shall be burned as a witch or a rebel if not as a heretic, and they have eight hundred men-at-arms at their back In this scene Mr Shaw shows his real greatness. His characters are largely types, and he is scrupulously fair to Catholic, Protestant, and Feudalist alike—which historians do not always succeed in being. Mr Shaw shows that it is not a tragedy of mere personal feeling, jealousy, or ambition, but a conflict of the spirit, a conflict of world-forces expressing themselves through human wills—the very essence of tragedy

The Scene is a great one The Bishop and the

Inquisitor, on raised chairs, act as judges, and there are some forty Canons, Doctors of Law and Theology, and Dominican monks, who act as assessors. The English chaplain, de Stogumber, is there, continually showing his irritation at the slowness and formality of the proceedings. There are also many scribes and Court officials. Joan is brought in, chained by the ankles, by a guard of English soldiers. Along with them is the executioner and his assistants. The Inquisitor, Lemaître, in his opening remarks, puts the issue fairly from his point of view.

"Heresy, gentlemen, heresy is the charge we have to try. Heresy at first seems innocent and even laudable, but it ends in such a monstrous horror of unnatural wickedness that the most tender-hearted among you, if you saw it at work as I have seen it, would clamour against the mercy of the Church in dealing with it. For two hundred years the Holy Office has striven with these diabolical madnesses, and it knows that they begin always by vain and ignorant persons setting up their own judgment against the Church, and taking it upon themselves to be the interpreters of God's will. You must not fall into the common error of mistaking these simpletons for liars and hypocrites. They believe honestly and sincerely that their diabolical inspiration is divine. . . You are going to see before you a young girl, pious and chaste. . . Therefore be on your guard. God forbid that I should tell you to harden your hearts; for her punishment, if we condemn her, will be so cruel that we should forfeit our hope of divine mercy were there one grain of malice against her in our hearts. But if you hate cruelty—and if any man here does not hate it I command him on his soul's salvation to quit this holy court—I say, if you hate cruelty, remember that nothing is so cruel in its consequences as the toleration of heresy. Remember also that no court of law can be so cruel as the common people are to those whom they

suspect of heresy The heretic in the hands of the Holy Office is safe from violence, is assured of a fair trial, and cannot suffer death, even when guilty, if repentance follows sin Innumerable lives of heretics have been saved because the Holy Office has taken them out of the hands of the people . Before the Holy Inquisition existed the unfortunate wretch suspected of heresy, perhaps quite ignorantly and unjustly, was stoned, torn in pieces, drowned, burned in his house with all his innocent children, without a trial, unshriven, unburned save as a dog is buried all of them deeds hateful to God and most cruel to man Gentlemen I am compassionate by nature as well as by my profession, and though the work I have to do may seem cruel to those who do not know how much more cruel it would be to leave it undone, I would go to the stake myself sooner than do it if I did not know its righteousness, its necessity, its essential mercy. I ask you to address yourself to this trial in that conviction Anger is a bad counsellor cast out anger Pity is sometimes a worse cast out pity But do not cast out mercy Remember only that justice comes first "

The trial proceeds. The Prosecutor and the assessors press and question Joan very hard, and she replies with girlish ingenuousness and common sense On the chief point they fail to move her She vows that she is a faithful child of the Church, but her Voices, the Voice of God, must be served first But that is the very point at issue The assessors are scandalised

"You, and not the Church, are to be the judge?" asks the Bishop

"What other judgment can I judge by but my own?" retorts Joan

CAUCHON.—"Out of your own mouth you have condemned yourself. . . Dare you pretend, after what you have said, that you are in a state of grace?"

To which Joan makes the unanswerable reply "If I am not, may God bring me to it if I am, may God keep me in it!"

It is only when threats of burning are made that Joan begins to blench. Ladvenu, the Dominican monk, asks the executioner

"Are you prepared for the burning of a heretic this day?"

THE EXECUTIONER — "Yes, Master"

LADVENU — "Is the stake ready?"

THE EXECUTIONER — "It is. In the market-place. The English have built it too high for me to get near her and make the death easier. It will be a cruel death."

JOAN (*horrified*) — "But you are not going to burn me now?"

LADVENU — "There are eight hundred English soldiers waiting to take you to the market-place the moment the sentence of excommunication has passed the lips of your judges. You are within a few short moments of that doom."

JOAN — "Oh God!"

LADVENU — "Do not despair, Joan. The Church is merciful. You can save yourself."

Joan, pressed to the verge of despair, agrees to confess her heresy, and sign the recantation, and she places her mark against her name on the document. De Stogumber, the English chaplain, is furious, for he feels that "the witch," as he calls her, is about to escape death. But the trial is not yet over. To Joan's consternation, the Inquisitor now proceeds to pronounce the punishment which is to be inflicted upon her because of her many sins.

"We, for the good of thy soul, do condemn thee to eat the bread of sorrow and drink the water of affliction to the end of thy earthly days in perpetual imprisonment."

Joan rises in terrible anger.

"Perpetual imprisonment! Am I not, then, to be set

free? Give me that writing" She rushes to the table; snatches up the document of recantation, and tears it into fragments, saying

"Light your fire my Voices were right . You promised me my life, but you lied You think that life is nothing but not being stone-dead It is not the bread and water I fear I can live on bread It is no hardship to drink water if the water be clean Bread has no sorrow for me, and water no affliction But to shut me from the light of the sky and the sight of the fields and flowers . . to make me breathe foul dampness, and keep from me everything that brings me back to the love of God when your wickedness and foolishness tempt me to hate Him . all this is worse than the furnace in the Bible that was heated seven times If only I could hear the wind in the trees, the larks in the sunshine, the young lambs crying through the healthy frost, and the blessed church bells that send my angel voices floating to me on the wind! But without these things I cannot live, and by your wanting to take them away from me, or from any human creature, I know that your counsel is of the devil, and that mine is of God"

The Court, in great commotion, cries "Blasphemy! blasphemy!" Joan is immediately denounced as a relapsed heretic, "infected with the leprosy of heresy." The judges hand her over to the secular power, the soldiers take her out of the court, and, in a few minutes, the glow and flicker of fire is seen through the doors and windows of the court, reddening the May daylight. The Court itself empties to watch the burning, and after some little time the Earl of Warwick strolls into the empty chamber. Soon the silence is broken by a frantic sobbing, and the chaplain, de Stogumber, staggers in from the courtyard, his face streaming with tears. The sight of the burning of the Maid has been too much for him, although, before, he was the fiercest of her persecutors. He calls himself

a hot-headed fool, and damns himself to all eternity for his share in the business. Warwick tries to soothe and calm him, but he continues hysterically.

"Jesus! she is in Thy bosom, and I am in hell for evermore. She asked for a cross. A soldier gave her two sticks tied together. Thank God he was an Englishman! I might have done it, but I did not; I am a coward, a mad dog, a fool. There was only one Englishman there that disgraced his country, and that was the mad dog, de Stogumber." And he rushes wildly out, shrieking "Let them torture him. Let them burn him. I will go pray among her ashes. I am no better than Judas. I will hang myself."

Immediately afterwards the Executioner comes to inform Warwick that his orders have been obeyed, and adds

"Her heart would not burn, my lord, but everything that was left is at the bottom of the river. You have heard the last of her."

WARWICK (*with a wry smile*)—"The last of her? Hm! I wonder!"

And here the great Scene ends.

But not the play. "I wonder?" Shaw answers Warwick's question in an Epilogue. The cynical statesman and military commander might well wonder, for within a comparatively few years England had lost the whole of her French territories—one of the greatest and most wholesome humiliations that ever befell a great and proud nation. Twenty-five years after Joan's death a new trial was held—a trial of rehabilitation. After a long judicial investigation the judges declared the former sentence null, non-existent, without value or effect, and that Joan was entirely purged of any mark or stigma of infamy. The scene of the Epilogue takes place immediately after this event. It is in the

bedroom of Charles the Seventh, the former Dauphin, on a hot summer evening Charles is in bed, not asleep, but reading Ladvenu, the Dominican monk who had befriended and attended Joan to the last, comes in to announce joyfully the result of this second trial and the sanctification of Joan's memory, and then departs from the paths of kings and palaces for ever. As the evening draws on a storm arises and a gust of wind blows out the candles, and in the ensuing thunder and lightning the spirit of Joan appears before the King, addressing him familiarly, as of old, as "Charlie," and asking what has happened since his wise counsellors "knew no better than to make a heap of cinders of me?"

Then, one by one, the spirits of those who had been instrumental in bringing Joan to death appear—Cauchon the Bishop, Lemaître the Inquisitor, de Stogumber the chaplain, the Archbishop of Rheims, Warwick the English commander, the Executioner, the soldier who had handed her the rudely made Cross on her way to the stake, for which act of charity he is allowed one day's release from hell each year. One by one they make their excuses and apologies for the blind yet guilty part they played in the tragedy. But when Joan, who treats their apologies very cavalierly, asks them whether, if she were to come back to life again, they would stand by her side and befriend her under similar circumstances, all, one by one, make their excuses. The society of the heretic and the rebel against authority is not sufficiently respectable for them! The last to remain is the soldier, and Joan asks of him what comfort he has for her. "Well," says the soldier, "what do they all amount to, these kings and captains and bishops and lawyers and such-like? They just leave you in the ditch to bleed to death, and the next thing is, you meet them down there, for all the airs they give themselves. What I say is, you have as good a right to your notions as they

have to theirs, and perhaps better You see, it's like this. If——" The first stroke of the hour of midnight sounds.

"Excuse me," says the soldier, "a pressing appointment——" pointing downwards. And as the midnight hour continues to strike, the play ends with the words of Joan

"O God, that madest this beautiful earth, when will it be ready to receive Thy saints? How long, O Lord, how long?"

It is a great play, which tells its own story It is great in that it brings before us not only a great historical event, but the very essence of tragedy, the conflict of conscientious, but more or less blind, human wills The reader will realise the difficulty in which the Catholic Church was placed if he will read a chapter or two of any reputable history recording the imbecile extravagances and cruel outrages to which heresy—as well as blind faith—sometimes led. Not many years after Joan's death, for example, one religious fanatic, like some of our African witch-doctors, was trying to get supernatural guidance by cutting out the hearts of infant children in order to secure a magic potion from their blood Obviously there are lines to be drawn. But no man who values freedom of thought can surrender the right to think and the right to utter his thought—the right to express that fragment of Truth which is born of "the light which lighteth every man that cometh into the world" Heresy is a perennial phenomenon It is the way in which Divine Truth is born into the world, and both Church and State have somehow to come to terms with it There is a passage in a letter by a Catholic priest, which Mr. Shaw quotes in his preface to *Saint Joan*, which puts the matter very clearly

"In your play," writes the priest, "I see the dramatic presentation of the conflict of the regal, sacerdotal, and

prophetical powers, in which Joan was crushed To me it is not the victory of any one of them over the others that will bring peace and the Reign of the Saints in the Kingdom of God, but their fruitful interaction in a costly but noble state of tension " That is excellently said. " A noble state of tension " means the utmost freedom of thought and speech, however heretical it may be. That is necessary in every age So blind is humanity, that the tragedy of the prison cell at Athens, the tragedy of Calvary, the tragedy of Hus, of Bruno, Servetus, and Joan may be re-enacted with the same brutal realism, and of course with the same conscientious professions of piety and religion at any time I wonder how many people are aware that, during the war, one of the most enlightened governments in the world—the United States—prohibited the circulation of the Sermon on the Mount through the mails! And in the year of grace 1919 another enlightened Government, the British Government in India, prohibited the circulation of one of the masterpieces of ancient wisdom, Plato's *Apology and Death of Socrates*, translated by Gandhi Such deeds fill one with profound contempt and indignation Thought, and the expression of it, must be free

But where thought branches into conduct there are lines to be drawn Obviously, society cannot allow every eccentric to adopt his own theories of sanitation, nor every sun-worshipper to go about the streets in sun-bath costume, with all due deference to Mr H G Wells. But in all things the utmost freedom should be allowed compatible with the welfare of society We have no more right to imprison a parent who believes that the sickness of his child can be cured by faith and prayer than we have to force upon him the even more imbecile faith that good health can be ensured or effectually promoted by the injection or inoculation of filthy disease-germs. " There is nothing for us," as Mr Shaw says,

“but to make it a point of honour to privilege heresy to the last bearable degree on the simple ground that all evolution in thought and conduct must at first appear as heresy and misconduct. In short, though all society is founded on intolerance, all improvement is founded on tolerance, on the recognition of the fact that the law of evolution is Ibsen’s law of change. And as the law of God in any sense of the word which can now command a faith proof against science is a law of evolution, it follows that the law of God is a law of change, and that when the Churches set themselves against change as such, they are setting themselves against the law of God.”

In the light of that sentence the Catholic Church might do worse than canonise a few more heretics—such as John Hus, Bruno, and Galileo—to encourage the others. When our Churches and theological colleges become as free—nay, much freer—than our colleges of education and science, there will be hope for the world.

With which pious hope we may well leave this great play

XIV

GALSWORTHY'S "THE FOREST" AND "JUSTICE"

It is not without significance that nearly the whole of our modern prophets, poets, and dramatists—Shelley, Ruskin, Tolstoi, Ibsen, Bernard Shaw, William Morris, Galsworthy, Thomas Hardy, Rabindranath Tagore, and Mahatma Gandhi—lay their finger on this or that defect in our civilisation, or on Western civilisation as a whole, and say there mankind suffers, there must it cleanse and purify itself, or die. They all deal with the relation of God to man and of man to God—that is, to the Spirit which brings man to birth—with the consequent ethical and religious relations of men to each other, and with the frailties and weaknesses of the human heart. There are some who say that our troubles can be overcome by the proper study of economics, sociology, psychology, and biology, and the application of the discovered laws and truths in these sciences to our human life. But none of our great prophets and dramatists say that. While allowing the great importance of science, they require and foretell a larger synthesis—a synthesis which shall include ethics and religion, for without religion, without spiritual faith and purpose, no civilisation can endure.

John Galsworthy is no exception to this rule. With gentle satire and grave impartiality he lays his finger on this or that weakness, cruelty, or injustice in our

social life and civilisation, and says Think on these things He does not belong to the greater dramatists There is no Hamlet, or Macbeth, or Othello, or Lear, or Brutus, in his creations His dramas are pictures of our everyday life in drawing-room, factory, workshop, office, home, court of justice, or prison, and his types are such as we meet with every day Sometimes there is too much of the type about them and too little of individual character and personality, and there his art is apt to suffer But within his limits, and especially in the social and psychological studies in his novels, he is great The Forsyte Saga will long remain as a detailed and true study and picture of certain social strata in late nineteenth-century and early twentieth-century life—the spiritual influence, subtly but powerfully drawn, of the worship of the great God Property on our middle and upper middle class There is something pathetic in the passing of an old order of society with its traditions, its customs, its standards of culture and refinement, brought into disastrous conflict with the cruder, and often, for the time being, the coarser customs and standards of the new We see this particularly in *The Skin Game*, in *Loyalties*, in *Strife*, and in many of his stories And Mr Galsworthy is scrupulously fair. He lets us see, and almost makes us see, both sides of the shield, so that we learn to make allowance And yet he does not disguise his sympathies He is always on the side of the bottom dog, of the waifs and strays of humanity. And he hates cruelty and injustice He has little or none of the flaming indignation, the bitter irony, the biting and almost savage satire, of Bernard Shaw, but his irony and his satire are none the less effective perhaps for being mingled with gentleness and pity Occasionally, indeed, his indignation leaps into flame, as when, during the war, he launched his scathing indictment against the Churches.

"Three hundred thousand church-spires raised to the glory of Christ! Three hundred million human creatures baptised into his service! 'I trust the Almighty to give the victory to my arms!' 'Let your hearts beat to God and your fists in the face of the enemy!' 'In prayer we call God's blessing on our valiant troops!' God on the lips of every potentate, and under the hundred thousand spires, prayer that 22,000,000 servants of Christ may receive from God the blessed strength to tear and blow one another to pieces, to ravage and burn, to wrench husbands from their wives and fathers from their children, to starve the poor and everywhere destroy the works of the spirit! 'God be with us to the death and dishonour of our foes'—that God who gave his only begotten Son to bring on earth peace and goodwill toward men! No creed can stand against such reeling subversion of its foundations. After this monstrous mockery, beneath this grinning skull of irony, how shall there remain faith in a religion preached and practised to such ends? When this war is over, and reason resumes its sway, our dogmas will be found scored through for ever"

In his recent drama, *The Forest*, Mr Galsworthy shows us how, in time of peace, our commercial and possessive civilisation strengthens the instincts and builds up the forces which culminate in this monstrous cruelty and hypocrisy. The first Act opens in the office of a London financier, Adrian Bastaple, well known for his munificent gifts to charities. There are present the editor of a Liberal paper, Charles Stanforth, a Nonconformist Peer, Lord Elderleigh; Pole Revers, of the Foreign Office, Robert Beton, a strong Imperialist, Tregay, a war correspondent, and Bastaple, the financier, with Farrell, his confidential clerk, in attendance. The gathering has been arranged with the object of talking over possible financial or exploitation developments in an unexplored part of East Central Africa bordering on Belgian territory. The explorer and prospector, John Strood, is waiting at Mombasa for the word "go." Pole Revers, of the Foreign Office, will furnish the necessary passports. The rest is a matter of finance, and a sufficiently respectable

philanthropic motive by which to justify the expedition and blind the eyes of the public to its real character. This motive is found in the ostensible object of putting down the slave trade which is known to exist in those parts, but the *real* object of the movers is to introduce indentured coolie labour for the exploitation of the territory, out of which they hope to make immense fortunes. The proprietor of the Liberal paper will put up two thousand pounds for the scheme, religion, represented by the Nonconformist Peer, will be good for another thousand; Finance (and Philanthropy), represented by Adrian Bastaple, will guarantee ten thousand. "Fine investment!" says Tregay, the war correspondent, who scents the real motive from the very first, and detests it. He has a cousin, a Dr Franks, in East Africa, and he has learnt from him something of the nature of the territory and the terrible hardships which will have to be faced by the expedition.

The next Act is in Central Africa, on the south shore of Albert Edward Nyanza, in the bungalow of a man named Samway, an elephant-hunter. Strood has got his cabled instructions. He is a born pioneer, explorer, and empire-builder, and has come to Samway to get what information he can about the unexplored territory. Samway shows him a small bag of diamonds as a sample of what the country contains. The Belgians are after it. It will be a race between a Belgian prospector and Strood. The suppression of the slave trade is a mere blind. Strood decides that the territory must be British, and the diamond mines worked and controlled by himself or a British syndicate. Samway advises him to take with him a man named Herrick, a naturalist, who is writing a book on Central Africa and gathering specimens of the fauna and flora of the country. The reason Samway advises this is that Herrick has a half-caste Arab girl as servant, whom he has befriended, and who,

in turn, is devoted to him. Her brother, Samehda, is a chief in the territory, and must be won over. She is the only person who can win him. Samway gives Strood a letter of introduction to Samehda, whom he knows of old, and advises Strood to take a sjambok with him. He will need it, he says, for the belt of country he is going through "is the darnedest bit of country God ever spat out—forest and marsh, and Batetela cannibals savage as hell," and his native carriers will need something more than gentle persuasion to get them through. The information about the diamonds, too, must be kept secret. They are going "to suppress the slave trade!"

The next scene is eight weeks later, in a native hut on the west bank of the Lualaba river. The exploring party consists of Strood, Dr. Franks, Collie, a Scotsman, Captain Lockyer, an ex-soldier, Herrick the naturalist, and Amina, his half-caste Arab servant-girl. The rest of the party are native servants and carriers. They have had a hard time, "eight hellish weeks," Dr. Franks says, and no attempt to find the slave trade. What's Strood after? Six of their native carriers are dead. More will die soon. All the white men are stricken with fever. The native carriers threaten to mutiny, and Strood has to bring out not only his sjambok, but his revolver also. This is empire-building! Strood has little tact. He antagonises his men, and, worst of all, by his overbearing manners he has made an enemy of Amina, the half-Arab servant-girl. Samway's letter of introduction to Samedha has disappeared from his tent, and he charges Amina with stealing it. She denies the charge; then, later, says that she has not only stolen the letter, she has torn it into shreds and eaten it in order to prevent Strood making use of it. This also turns out to be untrue. But Strood, in a passion, tries to lash her with his sjambok and is only prevented by Captain Lockyer, while Amina, with glittering eyes, threatens to kill him.

Things go from bad to worse. The forest becomes a horror and a nightmare to them. Fever, hunger, poisonous plants and insects, wild beasts, hostile and savage tribes armed with poisoned arrows, reduce the exhausted and emaciated expedition to a mere handful. Still Strood will not give in. Ultimately, they are surrounded, and Herrick persuades Amina to fetch her brother Samehda, the chief of the surrounding tribe, so that they may come to terms. Again Strood shows his want of tact by trying to force things and threatening Samehda with his revolver, to which Samehda replies with dignity.

“This *peace* palaver!”

Strood's arm is struck down by Amina with a little dagger. Samehda and Amina escape, taking all the native carriers with them.

The situation of the five white men is now hopeless. They hold out another day, some of them half-dead with fatigue. Then the end comes with a massed attack. Amina appears and tries to persuade Herrick to escape with her, but he refuses to leave the others, and the terrible scene ends with Strood trying to shoot Amina with his revolver while she springs at him and drives her dagger into his heart. Dr Franks alone escapes—he had been left behind some time before.

The scene of the last Act is in London, again in the City financier's office, in the following June. For months no news has been heard of the ill-fated expedition. The shares of the South African Concessions Company are sagging. Then a paragraph appears in the papers that Dr Clement Franks has arrived in London from Mombasa in connection with the mysterious expedition. He declines to make any public statement, but ugly rumours are abroad. Franks sends in his report to those concerned. He was not with the expeditionary party to the end, but he feels convinced they cannot have survived.

The country was too terrible. Having made his report, he wishes to forget all about it.

But Bastaple, the financier, is quite optimistic about the affair. He feels sure that Strood was not the man to allow himself to be baulked—he must surely have got through to those diamonds. He causes a paragraph to appear in the evening papers "Another De Beers Discovered." He is the instigator of another paragraph, a fake telegram from Lisbon, that news has been heard of Strood. Shares in South African Concessions begin to rise. Mr Bastaple has bought heavily. With further lies, intrigues, and manipulations of the share market Mr Bastaple is likely to make a princely sum. Dr Franks, when he hears of all this, is aghast.

"By God!" he says. "To make money! You people who sit here—if I had you in the forest, at the tail of a caravan, covered with sores, with shrunk stomachs, and your ribs sticking out of you! That'd teach you not to juggle with lives!"

Bastaple smiles icily and sardonically. Farrell, his confidential clerk, comes in and places a slip of paper in his hands. His shares in the African Concessions and bogus diamond fields have been sold, and he has realised on them the sum of two hundred and five thousand pounds. The play ends with Adrian Bastaple handing his confidential clerk a cheque for twenty thousand pounds, being ten per cent commission on the scoop, and instructing him to double his (Bastaple's) subscriptions to charitable institutions!

That, virtually says Mr. Galsworthy, is the financial side of empire-building and modern civilisation.

Galsworthy's *Justice* is a simpler play, both in its construction and its psychology. It is the story of a young man named Falder, a lawyer's clerk of a neurotic type, who has made the acquaintance of a young married woman with two children—Ruth Honeywill. Ruth has

been so abominably and cruelly treated by her husband that she decides to leave him. As she cannot get a divorce, Falder, who has fallen in love with her, is arranging to help her to leave the country, and he intends to follow shortly afterwards. But leaving the country means money, and Falder is poor. Matters are precipitated somewhat by Ruth appearing at the office asking Falder for immediate help. Her husband has become so violent that she dare not go back to him, and she must have money at once. Falder is at his wits' end. The same day he is sent by the chief clerk to cash a cheque at the bank. The cheque is for nine pounds. Falder, in a moment of weakness, alters the nine to ninety—adding a "ty" to the word nine. The forgery is, of course, discovered, and notwithstanding the pleadings of the chief clerk and the junior member of the firm, the head calls in the police, and Falder is committed for trial.

In the second Act we are in the court of justice. The necessary witnesses are called and the case against Falder is clear. His counsel can only make an appeal in mitigation of sentence. This he does most eloquently, pointing out the overwhelming temptation to which the defendant had been subjected, the cruelty of Ruth's husband, the claims of sympathy upon Falder arising from Ruth's and her children's defenceless condition, the hurried nature of the crime—committed in a moment of extreme tension—and so on. The judge admits all this. He is inclined to be merciful, as the law interprets mercy. But—society must be protected, and Falder is sentenced to penal servitude for three years.

In the next Act we are in the prison. We see the governor, the chaplain, the doctor, the warder. It appears that in these cases prisoners, during the first three months of their time, are kept in more or less solitary confinement. This loneliness tells on their

nerves They either break down or they try to escape Falder's old chief comes to the prison to visit his old clerk and to plead for a relaxation of the prison rules The governor shakes his head The chaplain says that a prison is not a hospital The doctor reports that there is nothing physically wrong with Falder, and there the appeal ends In the last scene in this Act not a word is spoken It is the inside of Falder's cell We see the neurotic ex-clerk pacing his cell, with nerves evidently in great tension We see the barred window, the bed-frame, the wooden table and stool, one or two books, the bright round tins out of which he eats his food The daylight is fading, and Falder stands motionless with his head inclined towards the bolted door, listening He moves a little closer to the door, making no noise, trying harder and harder to hear something Then he moves towards his task-work with a heavy sigh. In another minute he is up again "pacing the cell like an animal in its cage He stops again at the door, listens, and places the palms of his hands against it . . . Presently he paces back towards the window, holding his head, as if he felt that it were going to burst . . . Suddenly he picks up one of the tins and peers into it, as if trying to find a companion in his own face Then a sound comes from far away It seems to hypnotise him He creeps softly, inch by inch, nearer to the door The sound comes nearer He suddenly raises his clenched fists Panting violently, he flings himself at his door and beats on it " And the curtain falls

The fourth Act takes place in the upper room of the lawyer's office two years later Falder is free, on ticket-of-leave for good behaviour But he is having a bad time A jail-bird! When he gets a situation, and his employers hear of his past record, he is dismissed Sometimes his fellow-clerks object to work with him Ruth, too, has had a bad time She has maintained herself

and her children, but at a terrible cost. So Falder and Ruth have come as a last resource to beg that he may be forgiven and taken on again at the old firm. The chief clerk, who has always been sympathetic, is willing, but the head of the firm must be consulted. He too—not a bad man—is gradually brought over. But he makes one condition—if Falder comes back he must start with a clean sheet. He cannot have one of his clerks living with a married woman. The firm must be respectable, and respected. Falder must give up Ruth or Ruth must give up Falder. The two are brought in to the chief's office to hear the decision. When Ruth hears it she turns pale, and Falder, tense and unstrung, pleads that the one thing that has kept him from utter despair is his friendship and love for Ruth. The head, moved by these appeals, is about to give way, when the matter is taken entirely out of their hands by that blundering ass—the Law. Detective Wister is announced. He has come in search of Falder, to re-arrest him. Falder is still a ticket-of-leave man. He has neglected to report himself, and, worse still, there is a charge against him of obtaining employment by means of a forged reference. The others plead for time—they are about to give him another chance with a clean sheet. But the detective is adamant. He has his orders. The Law is—the Law. He dexterously twists his arm in Falder's, who is deadly pale, and marches him out of the office. Ruth faints. Immediately afterwards a scuffle takes place outside the door on the landing, and a moment later a dull thud is heard as of something falling. It is Falder, who has wrenched himself free from the detective, run on to the balcony, and flung himself into the street below. A few minutes afterwards the sound of feet is heard. It is Wister and others carrying in the dead body of Falder, his neck broken. As Ruth recovers and sees the body she

crouches before it whispering—"My dear," hardly realising what has happened. And the play ends with the old sentimental chief clerk saying

"No one'll touch him now! Never again! He's safe with gentle Jesus!" while Ruth stands over the body as though turned to stone

Justice! On the one hand, an unscrupulous financier, absolutely reckless of human life and suffering, making an immense fortune by a manipulated scoop on the Stock Exchange, handing his tool ten per cent of the proceeds, and instructing him, living-whited-sepulchre fashion, to double his charitable subscriptions, on the other hand, a wretched clerk, overcome by pity and sympathy for an ill-used woman, in a moment of weakness embezzling a sum of eighty-one pounds, and being slowly driven to despair and death by the blind stupidity of the law and the equally blind prejudices of his fellows! "Judge not, that ye be not judged, for with what judgment ye judge ye shall be judged, and with what measure ye meet, it shall be measured unto you" "What doth the Lord require of thee but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?" And this is the way we do justly, Mr Galsworthy seems to say. No attempt at psychological insight, no weighing of motives, no estimate of the pressure of temptation or the sweeping current of social and economic forces!

It is a curious and significant fact that neither Mr Shaw nor Mr Galsworthy ever create really hardened villains. There are no Macbeths or Iagos in their plays. Society villains perhaps, Pharisees, men and women made what they are by an evil social and economic environment, and blind conscientious fools—it is these who make tragedy, and in this sense both Shaw and Galsworthy portray the very spirit of tragedy, that "want of perception"—to quote Mr Wicksteed again—which is "the devil's strongest ally." Hence their

battling is not against personalities so much as against 'principalities and powers, and the world-rulers of this darkness.'

Nearly every one of Galsworthy's novels and dramas, and even his short stories, may be said to end with a note of interrogation. As he himself says "Every grouping of life and character has its inherent moral, the business of the dramatist is so to pose the groups as to bring the moral issue poignantly to the light of day" And Galsworthy does this, sometimes without a word, as in the prison scene in *Justice*. Inevitably, as we see Falder pacing his cell like a caged animal and beating his hands against the barred and bolted door, the question is forced upon the mind—Is this Justice? So, too, as in *The Forest*, *The Skin Game*, and in a dozen other plays and novels. Shaw and Galsworthy may preach, but they preach in parables, which are also a form of art, and their preaching is more effective than thousands of dogmatic sermons which leave the hearers cold and unmoved.

XV

THOMAS HARDY'S "THE DYNASTS"

(I)

It is a far cry from Æschylus and the unknown author of Job to Thomas Hardy. Yet, far as they are apart in time and circumstance, there is something that is common to all these men. They all wrestle with this dark world-problem of suffering and evil, and all come to a like conclusion about it—it is beyond our understanding. Hardy is the most pessimistic of the three, but his pessimism is not the despairing pessimism of James Thomson ("B V"). It is vibrant with ethical purpose, and seems to say: If the gods will not help us, let us help ourselves, and try to mould this world of human life nearer to our heart's desire. He has been called, and I believe he calls himself, agnostic. That is a very elastic term, for there comes a point where we all have to bow our heads and say: "I do not know." But Hardy is more deeply agnostic, and probably has less of spiritual faith, than either Æschylus or the author of Job. Words are elusive here. The "Spirit of the Years" and the "Spirit of the Pities" in the play seem to point to a belief in the spiritual structure and ordering of the universe, but it is an ordering which is of the nature of a blind Fate. For when the Spirit of the Pities, towards the end of the drama, asks:

"Why prompts the Will so senseless-shaped a doing?"

210 *The Ethical and Religious Value of the Drama*

the Spirit of the Years responds

“ I have told thee that It works unwillingly,
As one possessed, not judging ”

While the semi-chorus of Ironic Spirits sing the refrain

“ Of Its doings, if It knew
What It does, It would not do ! ”

And yet the drama ends with the Chorus of the Pities singing the hopeful song

“ But—a stirring thrills the air
Like to sounds of joyance there
That the rages
Of the ages

Shall be cancelled, and deliverance offered from the darts that were,
Consciousness the Will informing, till It fashion all things fair ! ”

The Dynasts, as Mr Hardy himself informs us, was not intended for the stage. It is in three volumes, and is composed of nineteen Acts and one hundred and thirty scenes. The action is laid in Europe during the Napoleonic wars, and in its pages we see kings, queens, emperors, statesmen, diplomats, courtiers, cardinals, generals, cabinets, parliaments, State ball-rooms, soldiers, armies, battle-fields, pass and repass before the mental horizon as the great game and tragedy of life is played, with rulers, armies, and peoples as tools and counters.

The drama begins with a Prelude in the Overworld—that is, the spiritual world in which mundane things are born and by whose laws they are ordered. There are present the Ancient Spirit and Chorus of the Years, the Spirit and Chorus of the Pities, the Shade of the Earth, the Spirits Sinister and Ironic with their Choruses, Spirit Messengers, and recording Angels. Their conversation is of the Immanent Will which works and pulses

in stars, planets, worlds, and throughout the Universe,
and the Shade of the Earth asks

"What of the Immanent Will and Its designs?"

SPIRIT OF THE YEARS

"It works unconsciously, as heretofore,
Eternal artistries in Circumstance,
Whose patterns, wrought by rapt æsthetic rote,
Seem in themselves Its single listless aim,
And not their consequence"

CHORUS OF THE PITIES (*to aerial music*)

"Still thus? Still thus?
Ever unconscious!
An automatic sense
Unweeting why or whence?
Then be the inevitable, as of old,
Although that so it be we dare not hold!"

SPIRIT OF THE YEARS

"Hold what you list, fond unbelieving Sprites,
You cannot swerve the pulsion of the Byss,
Which, thinking on, yet weighing not Its thought,
Unchecks Its clock-like laws"

SPIRIT OF THE PITIES

"Why doth It so and so, and ever so,
This viewless, voiceless Turner of the Wheel?"

And as the dialogue proceeds we learn that these Higher Powers of the Overworld look down upon the denizens of Earth as mere manikins, running hither and thither, eating and drinking, toiling and slaving, like ants on an ant-hill, imagining themselves the free makers of their destiny, but in reality mere pawns and counters in the hands of a mighty and irrevocable Fate. Already a little child is being born among them, in the obscure little town of Ajaccio in Corsica, who, possessed by Fate, will shake thrones and empires, and beget scenes of carnage which will "murder sleep." And as the dialogue

closes and the Spirits recede, the clouds open and the continent of Europe is disclosed, the Alps shaping like a backbone and the branching mountain-chains like ribs, while the lengthy lowlands stretching from the north of France through Belgium, Holland, and Germany to Russia, are hemmed in by the Ural Mountains and the glistening Arctic Ocean. As the view becomes clearer to the eye we discern "the surface of the perturbed countries, where the peoples, distressed by events which they did not cause, are seen writhing, crawling, heaving, and vibrating in their various cities and nationalities."

The first scene opens in England on a ridge in Wessex, in March, 1805. A stage-coach enters, and the passengers are discussing the news from France, and almost immediately a regiment of soldiers marches along the road singing

"We be the King's men, hale and hearty,
Marching to meet one Buonaparty"

Swiftly scene follows scene, and the next moment we are in Paris in the office of the Minister of Marine, where the Minister is reading despatches from Napoleon ordering all preparations to be made for a great naval battle. Solemnity is added to the drama by the continual appearance and comments of the Spirit and Choruses of the Years and the Pities. The Shade of the Earth inquires

"What boots it, Sire,
To down this dynasty, set that one up,
Goad panting peoples to the throes thereof,
Make wither here my fruit, maintain it there,
And hold me travelling through fineless years
In vain and objectless monotony,
When all such tedious conjuring could be shunned
By uncreation? Howsoever wise
The governance of these massed mortalities,
A juster wisdom his who should have ruled
They had not been"

SPIRIT OF THE YEARS

"Nay, something hidden urged
The giving matter motion, and these coils
Are, maybe, good as any"

SPIRIT OF THE PITIES

"But why any?"

SPIRIT OF THE YEARS

"Sprite of Compassions, ask the Immanent!
I am but an accessory of Its works
Whom chance has rendered conscious, and at most
Figure as bounden witness of Its laws . . .
But cease to ask of me
Meanwhile the mime proceeds"

And we are immediately transplanted to London, to the House of Commons, where a great debate is proceeding as to peace or war with France and Napoleon. The speeches of all the great statesmen and commoners—Sheridan, Pitt, Windham, Whitbread, Bathurst, Tierney, Fox—are summarised, and the die is cast for war, while the Spirit of the Years comments

"They know not what is shaping elsewhere
The while they talk thus stoutly"

Otherwhere the diplomatists, courtiers, and militarists are busy enough, manœuvring and intriguing for alliances. At Milan, Napoleon, now Emperor of the French, is being crowned King of Italy in the great cathedral there, and we see the great coronation ceremony with the procession of cardinals, archbishops, princes, princesses, courtiers, generals, heralds, pages, and officers of State in their royal and ecclesiastical robes and insignia, while the Spirit of the Pities innocently asks "What is the creed that these rich rites disclose?" to which the Spirit of the Years replies

"A local thing called Christianity,
Which the wild drama of the wheeling spheres
Includes, with divers other such, in dim,
Pathetical, and brief parentheses,
Beyond whose reach, uninfluenced, unconcerned,
The systems of the suns go sweeping on
With all their many-mortaled planet train
In mathematic roll unceasingly"

And the Spirit of the Pities observes

"I did not recognise it here, forsooth,
Though in its early, lovingkindly days
Of gracious purpose, it was much to me,"

while in the cathedral below, the archbishop continues the hollow and hypocritical adulations which are usually offered to monarchs on such occasions

In the next two Acts various scenes show us the preparations which are being made for war both in England and on the Continent. We are transported to Gibraltar, to the ships in the Mediterranean, where Nelson and Collingwood confer, then to Boulogne, where Napoleon discusses his plans with his admirals, then back to England, where, in country scenes in Wessex, the country-folk discuss the possible coming of Buonaparte, and frighten their children into obedience with his name, while the Choruses of Spirits chant, to the strains of aerial music, of the carnage that is soon to be

"We carry out? Nay, but should we
Ordain what bloodshed is to be?"

The Immanent that urgeth all,
Rules what may or may not befall!

Ere systemed suns were globed and lit
The slaughters of the race were writ,

And wasting wars, by land and sea
Fixed, like all else, immutably!"

And the Recording Angel writes of

"This movement as of molluscs on a leaf,
Which from our vantage here we scan afar"

In the fourth Act we see Pitt in conference with his foolish King, who is thinking more of sports, and pageants, and single-stick combats than of the parlous state of his realm. Then we are transported to the town of Ulm, where the Austrian army of eighty thousand men is encamped and besieged by the French Grand Army under Napoleon and his great generals, Soult, Marmont, Murat, Lannes, Ney, and Dupont. Ulm falls, and eighty thousand men lay down their arms before their conquerors. In the next scene we see the consternation this news creates in the English Cabinet, for Pitt's scheme of alliance is evidently failing. But in the next Act we see the counter-blow. Villeneuve, the French admiral, emerges from the harbour of Cadiz, and gives battle to Nelson and Collingwood in the bay of Trafalgar. We see the respective navies in battle-line, and the message which the English admiral signals to his fleet. "England expects every man will do his duty." In three or four scenes the battle is described, and we learn from the dialogue how officers and men alike loved their commander and beseeched him time after time to have more care of his life. We see his ship, the *Victory*, riddled with cannon-shot, her mizzen-topmast and rigging and wheel shot away, and her deck encumbered with dead and wounded men. Ultimately Nelson is struck down, and has to be carried to the cockpit over the crowd of dead and wounded. Hardy and his other officers bring him news continually of how the battle is going, but he feels that his end is near. He longs to be on deck, but "here I am," he says, "stove in,

"Broken—all logged and done for! Done—ay, done!"

DR BEATTY

"My lord, I must implore you to lie calm!
You shorten what at best may not be long"

NELSON

"I know, I know, good Beatty! Thank you well
Hardy, I was impatient Now I am still
Sit here a moment, if you have time to spare"

Time passes, and Hardy is wanted on deck. Again Nelson speaks, with the shadow of coming death upon his face

"Yes, Hardy—yes, I know it You must go
Here we shall meet no more, since Heaven forbend
That care for me should keep you idle now,
When all the ship demands you Beatty, too,
Go to the others who lie bleeding there,
Them you can aid To me you can give none!
My time here is the briefest If I live
But long enough I'll anchor But—too late—
My anchoring's elsewhere ordered! Kiss me, Hardy"

Hardy weeps as he bends over him, and shortly afterwards Nelson utters his last words

"I'm satisfied Thank God, I have done my duty"

BEATTY

"Ah—hush around!
He's sinking It is but a trifle now
Of minutes with him Stand you, please, aside,
And give him air!
Two hours and fifty minutes since he fell,
And now he's going"

They wait in silence. Nelson dies. And the chaplain exclaims.

"Yes . . . he has homed to where
There's no more sea."

And the Chorus of the Pities chants to aerial music

"His thread was cut too slowly ! When he fell,
And bade his fame farewell,
He might have passed, and shunned his long-drawn pain,
Endured in vain, in vain

A life there was—Sophocles—
Who visioned thus too clearly, even the while
He dubbed the Will "the gods" Truly said he,
'Such gross injustice to their own creation
Burdens the time with mournfulness for us,
And for themselves with shame '

Yea, yea, yea !
Thus would the Mover pay
The score each puppet owes,
The Reaper reap what his contrivance sows ! "

To which the Spirit of the Years responds

"Nay, blame not ! For what judgment can ye blame ?
In that unweeting Mind is shown
One far above forethinking, purposive,
Yet superconscious, a Clairvoyancy
That knows not what It knows, yet works therewith "

And the Chorus of the Years chimes in, again with
aerial music -

"Yea, yea, yea ,
Your hasty judgments stay,
Until the topmost cyme
Have crowned the last entablature of Time
O heap not blame on that in-brooding Will,
O pause, till all things all their days fulfil ! "

In the following scenes we see the great victory celebrated at the Lord Mayor's banquet in London, we see also Villeneuve, the French admiral, stab himself to death in the inn at Rennes rather than face the public disgrace of defeat, while in Hardy's native sea-side town in South Wessex the boatmen sing their song of victory.

218 *The Ethical and Religious Value of the Drama*

" In the wild October night-time, when the wind raved round
the land,

And the Back-sea met the Front-sea, and our doors were
blocked with sand,

And we heard the drub of Dead-man's Bay, where bones of
thousands are,

We knew not what the day had done for us at Trafalgar

(All) Had done,
Had done,
For us at Trafalgar !

" The victors and the vanquished then the storm it tossed and
tore,

Ashard they strove, those worn-out men, upon that surly shore
Dead Nelson and his half-dead crew, his foes from near and far,
Were rolled together on the deep, that night at Trafalgar.

(All) The deep,
The deep,
That night at Trafalgar ! "

And as the cloud-curtain falls the Chorus of the Years
again chants to aerial music

" Meanwhile the month moves on to counter-deeds
Vast as the vainest needs,
And fiercely the predestined plot proceeds "

In the next Act we see the sombre plot proceed
Napoleon strikes his counter-blow at Austerlitz It is
the night before the battle The Emperor's bivouac is
seen on the hill-side surrounded by the far-stretching
French camp, while in the plateau in the distance are
seen innumerable lights marking the bivouac of the
centre-divisions of the Austro-Russian army with its
scores of thousands of soldiers Napoleon is dictating
a patriotic proclamation to his army. In the Austro-
Russian camp the generals are discussing their plan of
action The next morning the battle begins The
Austrians and Russians have foolishly left their vantage-
ground in order to attack, and have thereby delivered

themselves into Napoleon's hands The battle continues all day The slaughter is immense One Russian column tries to escape by making for the Satschan lake, which is frozen over The ice cracks beneath their weight Napoleon, on the hill-side, seeing his advantage, directs a battery of cannon near to discharge its fire upon the ice which, under the heavy fire, immediately breaks, and thousands of Russian soldiers are engulfed in the water, their dying cries of despair reaching the watchers on the hill-side. The defeat becomes a rout, and the scene ends with the Semichorus of the Pities chanting

"O Great Necessitator, heed us now !
 If it indeed must be
 That this day Austria smoke with slaughter,
 Quicken the issue as Thou knowest how,
 And dull to suffering those whom it befalls
 To quit their lodgment in a flesh that galls !
 If it be in the future human story
 To lift this man to yet intenser glory,
 Let the exploit be done
 With the least sting, or none,
 To those, his kind, at whose expense such height is won ! "

To which the Semichorus of Ironic Spirits replies

"O Innocents, can ye forget
 That things to be were shaped and set
 Ere mortals and this planet met ?

* * * * *

"Could ye have seen its early deeds
 Ye would not cry, as one who pleads
 For quarter, when a Europe bleeds !

"Ere ye, young Pities, had upgrown
 From out the deeps where mortals moan
 Against a ruling not their own,

"He of the years beheld, and we,
 Creation's prentice artistry
 Express in forms that now unbe

* * * * *

"Beheld the rarest wrecked amain,
Whole nigh-perfected species slain
By those that scarce could boast a brain ,

"Saw ravage, growth, diminish, add,
Or peoples sane or peoples mad,
In choiceless round of good and bad ,

"Heard laughters at the ruthless dooms
Which tortured to the eternal glooms
Quick, quivering hearts in hecatombs

"Us Ancients, then, it ill befits
To quake when Slaughter's spectre flits
Athwart this field of Austerlitz ! "

In the next scene we see the consternation with which the news is received in England Pitt, on reading the despatch, cries in despair

"Roll up that map 'Twill not be needed now
These ten years ! Realms, laws, peoples, dynasties,
Are churning to a pulp within the maw
Of empire-making Lust and personal Gain ! "

And in the concluding scene in the Act we see Pitt dying, with the cry upon his lips .

"My country! How I leave my country ! "

"Austerlitz killed Pitt," wrote Wilberforce in his diary. But really he was worn out by the cares of State, and died at the early age of forty-seven, having been appointed Prime Minister at the age of twenty-five

Here, with the death of Pitt, the first part of the drama ends, and I have not space even to summarise the lengthy second part, which occupies six Acts and forty-three scenes In this part we see kings, courtiers, and diplomatists again intriguing for alliances, while the Spirit of the Pities cries .

"Alas ! what prayer will save the struggling lands,
Whose lives are ninepins to these bowling hands ? "

And the Spirit of the Years responds

"So the Will heaves through Space, and moulds the times,
With mortals for Its fingers! We shall see
Again men's passions, virtues, visions, crimes,
Obey resistlessly
The purposive, unmotived, dominant Thing
Which sways in brooding dark their wayfaring"

In scene after scene we see Napoleon ploughing his way to empire through flesh and blood, at Jena, at Wagram, in Poland, and in Spain. We see him checked by Wellington in the Spanish peninsula, and there is an impressive scene at Coruña of the burial of the ill-fated Sir John Moore. It is early dawn. The soldiers have time only to dig a shallow grave, and even as the chaplain begins the burial service with the words, "Man that is born of a woman hath but a short time to live, and is full of misery. He cometh up, and is cut down, like a flower, he fleeth as it were a shadow, and never continueth in one stay," the guns begin to boom, and their fire increases in frequency. The chaplain goes calmly on. "We therefore commit his body to the ground. Earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust." But the ceremony has to be cut short, the soldiers hastily fill in the shallow grave, and officers and men hurriedly return to their posts.

We see also Napoleon unscrupulously divorcing his wife Joséphine, and arranging for a marriage with the young Archduchess Marie Louise of Austria in order to strengthen his alliances. And we see the marriage take place in Paris with all the grandeur and stateliness of a State ceremony, in the presence of royalties, statesmen, cardinals, courtiers, ladies and gentlemen of highest rank, and thousands of the common people, the ceremony closing with the celebration of the Mass, while the dramatist shows his contempt for such vain and gilded forms and functions by making the Spirit Ironical say.

"The English Church should return thanks for this wedding, seeing how it will purge of coarseness the picture-sheets of that artistic nation, which will hardly be able to caricature the new wife as it did poor plebeian Joséphine. Such starched and ironed monarchists cannot sneer at a woman of such a divinely dry and crusted line as the Hapsburgs!"

We hear, too, the gossip of the London clubs and coffee-houses, the talk of the ladies of the Court, the indecent revelries and dances arranged by the vulgar Prince Regent, even while the poor old imbecile King George lay dying, and we see the death-chamber of the King himself, where, in his dotage, he awaits with trembling limbs the advent of the dread Messenger, while the Spirit of the Pities cries

"The tears that lie about this plightful scene
Of heavy travail in a suffering soul,
Mocked with the forms and feints of royalty
While scarified by briery Circumstance,
Might drive Compassion past her patience
To hold that some mean, monstrous ironism
Had built this mistimed fabric of the Spheres
To watch the throbbings of its captive lives,
(The which may Truth forbend), and not thy said
Unmaliced, unimpassioned, nescient Will!"

To which the Spirit of the Years replies:

"Mild one, be not too touched with human fate
Such is the Drama, such the Mortal state
No sigh of thine can null the Plan Predestinate!"

And the second part of this great drama ends with the Chorus of the Years chanting to aerial music

"No less through regal puppet-shows
The rapt Determinator throes,
That neither good nor evil knows."

And the Chorus of the Pities responds

"Yet It may wake and understand
Ere Earth unshape, know all things, and
With knowledge use a painless hand,
A painless hand!"

In the next and concluding part of the drama we shall see the scenes and acts which converge towards the final tragedies—the burning of Moscow, the terrible retreat in the snow, Leipzig, Elba, and Waterloo—with the chanted accompaniments of the Spirit of the Pities and the Spirit of the Years

XVI

THOMAS HARDY'S "THE DYNASTS"

(II)

THE third part of *The Dynasts* opens with a view of a portion of Napoleon's Grand Army for the invasion of Russia emerging from the dusky forests of Wilkowsky towards the bank of the River Niemen. The army, in all its columns, numbers some five hundred thousand men, mostly in the full pride and vigour of youth and strength. Napoleon has issued a proclamation which is being read by the captain of every company to his men. The proclamation speaks of the "glory" of the army and a "stable peace!" A counter proclamation by the Tzar to the Russian army has the like impudence to talk of "Liberty!"

In following scenes we see the field of Borodino, seventy miles west of Moscow, where the fighting was so terrible that men, maddened by pain,

"Entreated mates
To run them through and end their agony,
Boys calling on their mothers, veterans
Blaspheming God and man. Those shady shapes
Are horses, maimed in myriads, tearing round
In maddening pangs"

The next scene is Moscow. On the one side of the city we see an immense procession of people and vehicles, rich and poor, old and young, mothers carrying their

babes, the poor their household goods, the rich hurrying away in carriages, tradesmen with carts and wagons filled with commodities, peasants and farmers driving their cows, sheep, and goats. It is the procession of the refugees leaving the doomed city in thousands. Some time afterwards, on the other side of the city, we see the advance guard of the French army preparing to enter in triumph. Napoleon, Murat, Eugene, Ney, Daru, and the rest of the imperial staff gallop in, and on the Hill of Salutation gaze at Moscow, while Napoleon exclaims as he gazes: "Ha! there she is at last. And it was time." Time, indeed, with his army reduced by more than one-half. They enter the city, followed by the Grand Army, and Napoleon sleeps in the Kremlin, little knowing what awaits him. For Rostopchin, the wily governor of the city, has been busy at work. He has emptied the prisons, filled basements and cellars everywhere with inflammable material saturated with oil, laid gunpowder and explosives in secret places, and made everything ready for one of the greatest conflagrations in history. The fire begins in the evening. It waxes apace until a lurid glow appears in the sky, and before dawn Napoleon is awaked, and general after general appears to tell him that every part of the city is in flames, that the Kremlin itself is undermined with stores of gunpowder, that the army is in danger of being either burned or starved out, for they have been relying upon the city for supplies. There is nothing for it but retreat. Even Napoleon, stiff with obstinacy and pride and chagrin, begins to blench, and, after unnecessary but fatal delays—for winter is approaching—ultimately gives orders for that terrible retreat from Moscow which has covered his name and memory with eternal infamy and shame. His Grand Army, dogged on its flanks and in its rear by the Russian generals Kutuzof, Tchichagoff, Tchaplitz, Platoff, and Wittgenstein, reaches the River

Beresina Already a flake of snow has fallen, another, and another—terrible portent of things to come As the army reaches the Beresina they find there are not bridges enough to cross The French sappers and engineers begin to work, many of them emaciated with hunger, with thousands of sick and wounded behind them Soon the various divisions of the pursuing Russian army are upon them, and hundreds of the remaining French army, in their despair, try to wade through the river, while the Chorus of the Pities solemnly chants

“Then women [camp-followers] are seen in the waters—hump forms upbearing their infants between wizened white arms stretching above,

Yea, motherhood, sheerly sublime in her last despairing, and lighting her darkest declension with limitless love ”

And the Semi-chorus responds

“What will be seen in the morning light ?
What will be learnt when the spring breaks bright,
And the frost unlocks to the sun’s soft sight ?

“Death in a thousand motley forms ,
Charred corpses hooking each other’s arms,
In the sleep that defies all war’s alarms !

“Pale cysts of souls in every stage,
Still bent to embraces of love or rage—
Souls passed to where History pens no page ”

The remainder of the French army, in ones, twos, threes, and larger groups—“tattered men like skeletons,” says Hardy, “with noses and ears frostbitten, and pus oozing from their eyes”—plough their way through the drifting snow up to their knees, and sink one by one by the roadside with the snow as their winding-sheet. When they hear that their leader has deserted them, they curse him with their dying breath, and one mad soldier sings .

" Ha, for the snow and hoar !
 Ho, for our fortunes made !
 We can make our bed without sheets to spread,
 And our graves without a spade

" What can we wish for more ?
 Thanks to the frost and flood
 We are grinning crones—thin bags of bones
 Who once were flesh and blood

" So foolish Life adieu,
 And ingrate Leader too
 —Ah, but we loved you true !
 Yet—he-he-he ! and ho-ho-ho !—
 ✓ We'll never return to you "

Oh, when will our youth see through this lying romanticism about the "glory" of war and, instead of the false sentiment about "dying for their country," learn how to *live* for their country ! No leader, no general, no king, no country is worth dying for in rapine and bloodshed Ideas and the Kingdom of God are greater than any country

In the next scene we are in the royal palace in the Tuileries in Paris It is near midnight in early December. Marie Louise, the Empress, is about to retire for the night, when suddenly Napoleon appears He is hardly recognisable As he throws off his fur cloak and hood his shabby clothing is seen to be stained with mud. Marie Louise can hardly believe her eyes. Napoleon hurriedly explains He has travelled incognito Disasters many and swift came upon him He, the conqueror, became a fugitive

" Disasters—are they terrible ? "

inquires Marie Louise

" Where is the Grand Army ? "

NAPOLÉON —" Oh, that's gone "

MARIE LOUISE —" Gone ? But—gone where ? "

NAPOLÉON—"Gone all to nothing, dear"

MARIE LOUISE (*incredulously*)—

"But some six hundred thousand I saw pass
Through Dresden Russia-wards?"

NAPOLÉON—"Well, those men lie—

Or most of them—in layers of bleaching bones
'Twi'xt here and Moscow I have been subdued,
But by the elements, and them alone
Not Russia, but God's sky has conquered me!
From the sublime to the ridiculous
There's but a step!
Yes, briefly, it is quite ridiculous,
Whichever way you look at it—Ha-ha!"

MARIE LOUISE (*simply*)—

"But those six hundred thousand throbbing throats
That cheered me deaf at Dresden, marching East
So full of youth and spirits—all bleached bones—
Ridiculous? Can it be so, dear, to—
Their mothers, say?"

Napoleon is irritated. Things have gone badly in Spain also. He must raise another army, and that quickly—three hundred thousand men at least. "The life of the nation is at stake"—how often have we heard that cry before and since! And so the game goes on!

The next Act opens in Leipzig. Castlereagh's diplomacy has detached Austria from France. The Emperor Francis is now at war with his son-in-law, and three nations—Austria, Russia, and Prussia—unite to crush the usurper. The battle of Leipzig goes heavily against Napoleon, and once more he is a fugitive. The Allied armies begin to converge on France, and ultimately, Napoleon, reduced to despair, attempts suicide. His stomach refuses to retain the poison, however, and he exclaims

"God—here how difficult it is to die,
How easy on the passionate battle-plain!
Fate has resolved what man could not resolve
I must live on, and wait what Heaven may send!"

Further scenes in the same Act show us the dying ex-Empress Joséphine in her bedchamber at Malmaison, the Prince Regent of England, with his royal cronies and his coarse jokes, at the Opera House in London, where a State performance of the opera *Aristodemo* is being given to celebrate the Peace, and Napoleon himself, a captive, on his way to exile in Elba

In the next Act we are in Elba, in Napoleon's residence in Ferrajo. Nearly a year has elapsed. The guardian officer set over Napoleon by the Allies has absented himself from the island for a time, and Napoleon, under cover of darkness, escapes with a few tried comrades of the old guard. For hours they wait in the frigate for a favourable wind, which ultimately bears the little vessel to the south coast of France. Once more on French soil, soldiers, old and young, fascinated by his great name and the memory of his exploits, begin to gather round him, and within twenty days he is again in the royal palace in the Tuileries dictating proclamations and decrees. The statesmen and diplomats are again at work negotiating alliances and preparing for a renewal of the war. In Scene V we are again present at a debate in the Commons' House of Parliament, with Castlereagh, Vansittart, Bathurst, Palmerston, Ponsonby, Arbuthnot, and Plunkett on the one side, and Sir Francis Burdett, Whitbread, Tierney, Abercromby, Dundas, Sir Samuel Romilly, Ridley, and Osborne on the other. Napoleon's offers to observe the Treaty of Paris and keep the Peace are rejected, and, as is usual in such cases, the bitter-enders win the day, despite Sir Francis Burdett's blunt warning that—

"No man can doubt that this Napoleon stands
As Emperor of France by Frenchmen's wills
Let the French settle then their own affairs,
I say we shall have naught to apprehend!"

And once more the wheels are duly set in motion for a renewal of the war

In the beginning of the next Act we see Napoleon's new army moving towards the Belgian frontier, and, in following scenes, the celebrated ballroom at Brussels on the eve of Waterloo, while Napoleon sleeps at Charleroi, and, as he sleeps, says the dramatist, there passes in vision before his disordered brain a procession of "hundreds of thousands of skeletons and corpses in various stages of decay They rise from his various battlefields, the flesh dropping from them, and gaze reproachfully at him," and the sleeper murmurs in his dream

"Why, why should this reproach be dealt me now ?
Why hold me my own master, if I be
Ruled by the pitiless Planet of Destiny ?"

Next morning the historic battle begins, and we see the armies marching towards the village of Ligny, while the Spirit of the Pities cries

"I see an unnatural Monster, loosely jointed,
With an Apocalyptic Being's shape,
And limbs and eyes a hundred thousand strong,
And fifty thousand heads, which coils itself
About the buildings there"

To which the Spirit of the Years responds

"Thou dost indeed
It is the Monster Devastation Watch"

The scene changes to Quatre-Bras, and the tide of victory and defeat surges now here, now there, the whole day long, at Piraumont, Bossu, Ligny, Gémioncourt, Quatre-Bras, until night falls and the soldiers are glad to sink down in the mud and the blood of the battlefields to sleep the heavy sleep of exhaustion, huddling

together in their blankets, or dropping down like dead men, while the camp-fires pale in the dying night, and the Choruses of the Years and the Pities chant their sad and solemn strains

"The eyelids of eve fall together at last,
And the forms so foreign to plain and tree
Lie down as though native, and slumber fast !

"The trees seem opprest, and the Plain afraid
Of a something to come

* * * * *

"So the season's intent, ere its fruit unfold,
Is frustrate, and mangled, and made succumb,
Like a youth of promise struck stark and cold !
And what of these who to-night have come ?

"And each soul shivers as sinks his head
On the loam he's to lease with the other dead,
From to-morrow's mustfall till Time be sped !"

The last Act opens on the following morning on the field of Waterloo, whither the main armies and the chief military formation have drifted. The rain is falling and the battle-field speedily becomes a quagmire. We are shown the position of the English army, the French army, the Prussian army, the Hougomont château, the farm of La Haye Sainte, Saint Lambert's Chapel Hill, and later, Blucher's timely aid, while at various points of vantage the great generals, Napoleon and Wellington, anxiously survey the swaying tide of battle, receive reports, and give their orders as the bloody need arises. We see the heroic cavalry charges of Marshal Ney, at which even Wellington cannot withhold an exclamation of admiration, for both horses and men are mown down in hundreds, while the survivors, led by Ney himself, return to the charge again and again. Both generals, their faces full of gloom, almost pray for the reinforcements which they cannot command, and Napoleon

descends to the truly militarist tactics of spreading a lying report among his soldiers that French reinforcements to the number of thirty-three thousand men are near; in order to revive their drooping spirits and nerve their exhausted bodies to fresh exertions. But those thirty-three thousand men are Blucher's Prussians, come in the very nick of time. The French guard gives way and recedes, and the whole French line rolls back like a tide. The defeat gradually becomes a rout, and "the streams of French fugitives as they run," says Hardy, "are cut down and shot by their pursuers, whose clothes and contracted features are blackened by smoke and soiled with loam and blood. Some of the French blow out their brains as they fly. The sun drops below the horizon while the slaughter goes on," and the Spirit of the Years bids the attendant spirits

"Observe that all wide sight and self-command
Deserts these throngs now driven to demonry
By the Immanent Unrecking Naught remains
But vindictiveness here amid the strong,
And there amid the weak an impotent rage"

To which the Spirit of the Pities returns the question

"Why prompts the Will so senseless-shaped a doing?"

And the Spirit of the Years replies:

"I have told thee that It works unwittingly,
As one possessed, not judging"

And the Semi-Choruses of Ironic Spirits chant in alternation to aerial music

"Of Its doing if It knew,
What It does It would not do!"

"Since It knows not, what far sense
Speeds Its spinings in the Immense?"

"None, a fixed foresightless dream
Is Its whole philosopheme"

And as "the dusk grows deeper . . . and the night grows clear and beautiful, and the moon shines musingly down, in the vast and dusky shambles whence the appeals and groans of the wounded arise, black slouching shapes begin to move—the plunderers of the dead and dying"—and the scene ends with the soliloquy of the Spirit of the Years

"So hath the Urging Immanence used to-day
Its inadvertent might to field this fray,
And Europe's wormy dynasties re-robe
Themselves in their old gilt, to daze anew the globe!"

In the last scene of the Act we see Napoleon, a solitary figure, at midnight, on a jaded horse, as he enters the wood of Bossu, musing on his defeat and cursing the Destiny which has brought all his work to naught. We are not shown St. Helena. But there is an after-scene called "The Over-World," greater than St. Helena, where the Spirits of the Universe or the Over-World converse—the Spirit and Chorus of the Years, the Spirit and Chorus of the Pities, the Spirits Sinister and Ironic, with Spirit Messengers and Recording Angels, and part of their converse is as follows

SPIRIT OF THE YEARS

"Thus doth the Great Foresightless mechanise
In blank entrancement now as evermore
Its ceaseless artistries in Circumstance
Of curious stuff and braid, as just forthshown
Yet but one flimsy riband of Its web
Have we here watched in weaving, web enorme,
Whose furthest hem and selvage may extend
To where the roars and plashings of the flames
Of earth-invisible suns swell noisily,
And onwards into ghastly gulfs of sky,
Where hideous presences churn through the dark . . .
Yet seems this vast and singular confection
Wherein our scenery glints in scantest size,
Inutile all—so far as reasonings tell."

234 *The Ethical and Religious Value of the Drama*

The Spirit of the Pities demurs, and the Spirit of the Years asks

“ What would'st have hoped and had the Will to be ?— ”

and the Spirit of the Pities replies

“ The Will that fed my hope was far from thine,
One I would thus have hymned eternally,— ”

and the Semi-choruses chant to aerial music

“ To Thee whose eye all Nature owns,
Who hurlest Dynasts from their thrones,
And liftest those of low estate
We sing, with Her men consecrate !

“ Yea, Great and Good, Thee, Thee we hail,
Who shak'st the strong, Who shield'st the frail,
Who had'st not shaped such souls as we
If tender mercy lacked in Thee !

“ Though times be when the mortal moan
Seems unascending to Thy throne,
Though seers do not as yet explain
Why suffering sobs to Thee in vain ,

“ We hold that Thy unscanted scope
Affords a food for final Hope,
That mild-eyed Consciousness stands nigh
Life's loom, to lull it by and by

“ The systemed suns the skies enscroll
Obey Thee in their rhythmic roll,
Ride radiantly at Thy command,
Are darkened by thy Master hand !

“ Exultant adoration give
The Alone, through Whom all living live,
The Alone, in Whom all dying die,
Whose means the End shall justify !

Amen ”

SPIRIT OF THE PITIES

"So did we evermore sublimely sing,
So would we now, despite thy forthshowing!"

But the Spirit Ironic chimes in

"For one I cannot answer But I know
'Tis handsome of the Pities so to sing
The praises of the dreaming, dark, dumb Thing,
That turns the handle of this idle Show!
As once a Greek asked I would fain ask too,
Who knows if all the Spectacle be true,
Or an illusion of the God (the Will,
To wit) some hocus-pocus to fulfil?"

And the Semi-choruses again alternately take up the strain

"Last as first the question rings
Of the Wills long travailings,
Why the All-mover,
Why the All-prover

Ever urges on and measures out the droning tune of Things

* * * * *

"Nay—shall not its blindness break?
Yea, must not Its heart awake,
Promptly tending
To Its mending

In a genial germing purpose, and for lovingkindness' sake?

"Should It never
Curb or cure
Aught whatever
Those endure

Whom It quickens, let them darkle to extinction swift and sure"

CHORUS OF SPIRITS

"But—a stirring thrills the air
Like to sounds of joyance there
That the rages
Of the ages

Shall be cancelled, and deliverance offered from the darts that
were,

Consciousness the Will informing, till It fashion all things fair!"

There the great drama ends. The impression it leaves upon the mind is one of overwhelming sadness. Yet out of that sadness Mr. Hardy wrings a deeper pity, and, out of that sense of pity for the woes of mankind, a deeper determination to build a fairer and a better world. It is here that Mr. Hardy's heart is better than his philosophic creed. For what is the use attempting to build a fairer and a better world if human beings are but pawns and counters in a purposeless and an incomprehensible game, without determinate Wills of their own, mere "molluscs on a leaf," or puppets in a raree-show? In that case Pity itself is but a puppet. It is true, indeed, that absolute proof as to the truth of our various ethical, spiritual, or metaphysical beliefs is impossible, but that is a dictum that tells both ways and leaves us in the position of having to formulate or construct our own theory as to the purpose of life, and our own part, plan, and work in that purpose. And for my own part I prefer the attitude of Shelley, and Tolstoi, and Bernard Shaw, which, though acknowledging that we have no certain knowledge of the Beyond, yet admits and affirms that there *is* a Beyond, and that in the fashioning of that we have an intelligent part to play and a work to do.

Possibly Thomas Hardy means that too, and it may be that the assumption that we are as mere pawns in the game or puppets in the show is intended to be purely ironical, to gird us to a deeper intelligence and a stronger self-control by the reminder that men have too often allowed themselves to be turned into pawns and puppets and cannon-fodder to their own undoing by kings, emperors, statesmen, diplomats, politicians, Mammon-worshippers, and the worshippers of the God of Things as they are. Certainly the concluding stanza in the drama seems to point to that interpretation—of a developing human consciousness, the instrument, or

rather the co-worker, of a World-consciousness which shall "fashion all things fair"

Thomas Hardy has been called an agnostic, and possibly he would describe himself by that elastic and rather ambiguous word. But in these deep things of Mind, Life, and Destiny, names do not much matter. It is the spirit that matters. And in the essential things of the spirit Thomas Hardy is one of the prophets. In the ethical and spiritual sphere the reverent agnostic becomes gnostic, because his Moral Imperative becomes as a divine voice in his heart and life. Great agnostics like John Stuart Mill, Professor Huxley, George Eliot, and Thomas Hardy surely stand for more, in the eyes of the Recording Angels, than do many reputedly orthodox Christians. But here, again, I am bettering Hardy's creed. *The Dynasts*, as drama and as literature, belongs to the Immortals, and stands above criticism. It will take its place by the side of the Book of Job, the *Prometheus Bound*, *Prometheus Unbound*, and *King Lear*. With these it illustrates the essentially religious nature of great drama as well as great music¹ and great poetry. The great things of the Spirit—Life, Death, Personality, Heredity, Free-will or Fate, Judgment, the After-world—all these take dramatic form, and, in turn, react upon the hearts and lives of the hearer and the reader. From Æschylus and the unknown author of Job to Shakespeare, from Shakespeare to Shelley, and from Shelley to Ibsen and Bernard Shaw and Thomas Hardy, we see the ethical or spiritual motive at work much more deeply and strongly than in formal creed or church ceremonial. That is not to say that the latter, when rational, have no value—far from it. But they fall into their proper place as helps, not as arbiters of the soul. Always there is some task thrown upon ourselves, some discriminating judgment, some appropriation or assimilation,

¹ See my little book on *Drama, Music-Drama, and Religion*

of spiritual material, some standard of action, the choice of some ideal or "way" of life—and in those processes of judgment, assimilation, choice, and action "the play's the thing" which catches the conscience of the inner king, which, in its turn, moulds and determines our life to greater issues than we know

XVII

CONCLUSION

It would be a mistake on my part if, in concluding this book, I allowed the reader to suppose that Thomas Hardy's drama, *The Dynasts*, is the last word on "the ways of God to men." In these matters there is no final word. The problem is so deep and vast that the finite mind of man, even the greatest of men, cannot possibly envisage it in all its bearings—cannot express the full meaning and implications of human experience, or the full meaning and implications of the infinite realm of spiritual truth. We have to try to exercise a wise eclecticism.

The story and the message of the drama, like that of every other art and every other institution, is simply one chapter in the larger story of the intellectual and spiritual evolution of the race. If we turn our minds back to the time when the drama of Job was written—a time when some of the Hebrew tribes, despite the teachings of their prophets, were still occasionally offering their eldest-born as a sacrifice to their cruel conceptions of God—we shall see how far, and through what frightful experiences, mankind has travelled. We see, in ancient Greece, in the religious drama of the Middle Ages, in the age of Shakespeare, in the age of Goethe, and in the great dramas of the nineteenth century and of our own time, the mind of man struggling with these eternal problems and rising, through the struggle, to higher and purer conceptions of the Supreme

and of man's relation to it. These purer conceptions have re-acted upon his own moral and spiritual life, have deepened and strengthened the "moral imperative," which becomes to him as a Divine Word, and have slowly raised him from the position of a being crouching before the Eternal in fear and terror, to that of one who recognises himself as a co-operant and fellow-worker in the evolution and development of the spirit. Despite Mr Hardy's fatalism and pessimism, if we watch the long unfolding and development of dramatic art through the ages and note its ever-heightening appeal, we see it bidding man worship ever nobler conceptions of humanity and of God, and, through this worship, cleansing and purifying his conceptions, habits, desires, and modes of life. That ever-heightening appeal could not spring from the heart of man were it not first in the Spirit which brought forth the heart of man. As Shakespeare so truly and profoundly says

" Yet Nature is made better by no mean,
But Nature makes that mean so o'er that art,
Which, you say, adds to Nature, is an art
That Nature makes. You see, sweet maid, we marry
A gentle scion to the wildest stock,
And make conceive a bark of baser kind
By bud of nobler race. This is an art
Which does mend Nature—change it rather, but
The art itself is Nature "

And, to quote Emerson again, in this process of making and re-making—

" To insight profounder
Man's spirit must dive,
His aye-rolling orbit
No goal will arrive,
The heavens that now draw him
With sweetness untold,
Once found—for new heavens
He spurneth the old."

And the heavens, or the spirit and the potentialities of them, that are in the breast of man must first be in the breast of the Spirit which brings forth man. Out of nothing, nothing can come. With all respect and gratitude to Mr Hardy, let us not forget the message of the unknown author of Job, of Æschylus, of Shakespeare, of Goethe, and the great dramatists of our own day. Not in one mind alone, but in a multitude of such minds is Wisdom to be found, for each mind presents life with a different facet.

As a matter of fact, we ourselves are not in a condition to consider, or even to state clearly, the problem of the relation of man to the Eternal, unless we bear three things in mind. First, that it is the aim of great art—whether in music, poetry, drama, painting, sculpture, or architecture—to bring before the mind a deeper consciousness of a world, or a state of life and being, above or beyond—or shall I say higher?—than this present life. Music, poetry, painting, drama, architecture, at their best, do that. Second, that this consciousness of a higher state of life and being can only be created, or educated and developed, in proportion to an individual's or a people's capacity for receiving and assimilating the higher message. Compare again the author of Job's conception of Wisdom with that of the tribal and priestly child-sacrificers of his time. Here, we are back again at the old problem of the Devil's ally—"want of perception." Third, that it is the aim of the artist, especially the dramatic artist, to dispel this spiritual blindness by the beauty, the loveliness, the solemnity, the awe, and the cheerful and healthy sanity with which he clothes or surrounds his visions of the ideal or the "beyond," so that he may unconsciously inspire and stimulate the mind and heart of the hearer or the reader to translate or transform his visions into realities by the pressure or the charm of the "spiritual imperative," the "Will."

of a higher conception of the Spirit. The saying attributed to Voltaire and others that if there were no God it would be necessary to invent one, sounds somewhat cynical, but it is certainly true to say that if there were no visions and no ideas of a better and a higher life it would be necessary to follow Plato's example and invent them. The great artist is not a worshipper of the God of Things as they are.

But the present-day reader is probably flattering himself that *he* is not likely to fall into such superstitions and cruelties as those of the child-sacrificers, the upholders of slavery, the persecutors of heretics and reputed witches, the patrons of gladiatorial shows, Spanish bullfights, and the modern battue. In other words, *he* is not afflicted with want of perception, and is not likely to be guilty of stoning the prophets! But I wonder how many people realise that, as we have seen, the poet who wrote *Prometheus Unbound* was expelled from one of the foremost universities in the world for heresy, that while Ibsen was writing his drama, *A Doll's House*, women were still widely regarded as mere house-fraus to minister to the comforts and appetites of their lords and masters, and that Ibsen himself was attacked with the virulent hatred of fanaticism, that while Tolstoi was writing his denunciations of militarism and war he himself was excommunicated from his Church, and the Christian nations of Europe were preparing for the greatest and most terrible war in the world's history! Yet "if *we* had lived in the days of our fathers we should not have been partakers with them in the blood of the prophets!" As a matter of fact, the mind of man is so small, and the realm of undiscovered spiritual truth so vast, that these tragic collisions are possible in every generation.

There are two things which we all need to learn, either from our experience of life or from our interpretation

and appreciation of great literature, great art, and great drama. First, such final wisdom—final, I mean, for us while here—such final wisdom as will bring us “peace at the last.” Second, such knowledge of life and of the ways of the Spirit as will enable us to play our part in the struggle and battle of life with courage and dignity. On these matters we can gain light from these great dramas, and the light we gain need not be that from any one mind only, but the clearest and best in all. The drama of Job, with its ancient wisdom, the Greek drama, with its inevitable Nemesis—“the medicine of the soul”, Shakespeare, with his purifying fire of experience, Goethe, with his “luminous view”; Ibsen, with his message of love triumphing over Brand’s fanaticism and Peer Gynt’s blind selfishness, Bernard Shaw, with his clear vision, his splendid sanity, and his healthy yet restrained meliorism and vitality, Thomas Hardy, with his Spirit of the Pities—all these combined help, as all great art and great poetry help—in the words of Viscount Morley—“to lead us into inner moods of settled peace, ‘to touch the depth and calm the tumult of the soul,’¹ to give us quietness, strength, steadfastness, and purpose, whether to do or to endure.”

Two modern dramatists especially help to give us this maturer wisdom—Shakespeare and Bernard Shaw—and we must ever bear them in mind as we read Thomas Hardy. Even in Shakespeare’s period of “storm and stress” there is one gleam of light shining through all the great tragedies—the ethical spirit, the Nemesis of retribution, which pervades them. But it is in his final play that we find this ethical spirit most clearly expressed, and expressed in such a way as to make man a necessary co-operant with God. “Harvest after harvest of artistic achievement Shakespeare had brought forth,” says Mr Frank Harris. “Yet he was never strong, and he died at

1 I have altered one word in this quotation

fifty-two, and the last six years of his life were wasted with weakness and ill-health. After *Hamlet* and *Antony and Cleopatra* and *Lear* he broke down, yet as soon as he struggled back to sanity he came to the collar again and dug *The Winter's Tale* out of himself, and *Cymbeline*, and, seeing they were not his best, took breath, and brought forth *The Tempest*, another masterpiece, though written with a heart of lead and with the death-sweat dank on his forehead" If there is no Providence, he seems to say, then I will play the part of Providence, and show, as in an enchanted mirror, the ways of God to man And so *The Tempest* is not like his other plays, a picture from life, it is rather an allegory, in which the spiritual laws and forces which govern our life are laid bare Through these spiritual laws, Shakespeare seems to say, we learn that freedom can be won only through service

" Oh, block by block, with sore and sharp endeavour,
Lifelong we build these human natures up
Into a temple fit for Freedom's shrine,
And Trial ever consecrates the cup
Wherefrom we pour her sacrificial wine " 1

" Into a temple fit for Freedom's shrine "—that is the pervading thought of Shakespeare's *Tempest*—that true freedom can only be attained through service And where, in differing natures, this spiritual freedom is abused, misused, or not attained,

" The rarer action is
In virtue than in vengeance "

" My ending is despair "

he says in the Epilogue,

" Unless I be relieved by prayer,
Which pierces so, that it assaults
Mercy itself, and frees all faults "—

1 James Russell Lowell's *Trial*

a prayer, surely, which finds an echo in every heart that is not hardened in blindness

Conjoin with this Lilith's great soliloquy at the conclusion of Bernard Shaw's *Back to Methuselah*, where Lilith says that mankind shall not be superseded "until they have forded this last stream that lies between flesh and spirit, and disentangled their life from the matter that has always mocked it I can wait . . . I brought life into the whirlpool of force, and compelled my enemy, Matter, to obey a living soul But in enslaving Life's enemy I made him Life's master, for that is the end of all slavery, and now I shall see the slave set free and the enemy reconciled, the whirlpool become all life and no matter Of Life only is there no end, and though of its million starry mansions many are empty and many still unbuilt, and though its vast domain is as yet unbearably desert, my seed shall one day fill it and master its matter to its uttermost confines And for what may be beyond, the eyesight of Lilith is too short It is enough that there is a beyond "

And for battle-cry here, from the same brave spirit "My life belongs to the whole community, and as long as I live it is my privilege to do for it whatsoever I can. I want to be thoroughly used up when I die, for the harder I work, the more I live I rejoice in life for its own sake Life is no brief candle for me It is a sort of splendid torch which I have got hold of for the moment, and I want to make it burn as brightly as possible before handing it on to future generations "

Freedom through service once more! This ethical spirit shines out from all these great dramas, and in the lives of the great spirits among mankind, as the one gleam of light upon our way Otherwise all is mystery—yea, unrelieved darkness and gloom It is mystery that men should blindly drive this ethical spirit out of their hearts and lives, and climb to success and power over

broken hearts and wasted lives and garments rolled in blood. It is mystery, deep and inscrutable, that men and women, young men and young women, with the making of their unknown future before them, should have no ethical or religious aim, no motive and no purpose in life, that indifference and apathy should so deaden the soul and maim the higher part of their nature that their precious hours of leisure are fretted away in vain pursuits and selfish excitements and pleasures from which there is no fruition, and which narrow and drain the heart as they indulge. Every one of these great dramas is a protest against that view of life. Here, the prophets, the poets, and the dramatists are at one.

“Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might, for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom in the grave whither thou goest.”

“Freedom through Service”

“The rarer action is

In virtue than in vengeance.”

But even these trite and ancient truisms are not enough. They need to be joined with a spirit which seeks to acquire identity of self-consciousness with intelligence—in other words, with Wisdom—which, as Dr Macneile Dixon truly says, it is the aim of the drama and especially the tragic drama, to produce.

INDEX

- Æschylus's *Prometheus Bound*, 41-55
 its religious themes, 42
 its treatment of the problem of undeserved
 suffering, 52-55
- Agnosticism in drama, 33-35, 37, 209, 237
- Aristotle on Tragedy, 93, 94, 95 *note*
- Art and its relation to life, 241, 242, 243
- Back to Methuselah*, Bernard Shaw's, 169-179
- Blake, William, on "want of perception," 91
- Brand*, Ibsen's, 112-126
- Carlyle on *Faust*, 94
- Civilisation, modern, its sickness, 197
- Creeds as helps, not arbiters, of life and destiny, 237
- Davidson, Thomas, on *Faust*, 90
- Diestensis, Pieter, *Everyman*, 60-69
- Dixon, Dr W Macneile, on "Tragedy," 95 *note*, 246
- Drama and personality, 12
- Drama and religion, 11, 12, 42, 56-60 *et seq*
- Elot, George, 30
- Emerson, 37, 55, 89, 240
- Everyman*, 60-69
- Faust*, Goethe's, 82-95
 ,, its problem of self-realisation, 90-95
 ,, Carlyle on, 94
- Forest, The*, Galsworthy's, 197-203
- France, Anatole, and war, 163
- Freedom of thought and freedom of action, 194-196

248 *The Ethical and Religious Value of the Drama*

Galsworthy's *The Forest*, 197-203

„ *Justice*, 203-208

„ indictment of the Churches, 199

God, unjust conceptions of, broken down by great dramas, 28, 29, 48, 106, 107, 237, 240

Goethe's *Faust*, its central problem, 90-95

Hardy's, Thomas, *The Dynasts*, 209-238

his pessimism, 209-210, 240

his spiritual agnosticism, 209, 237

the reaction of his ethical spirit to his pessimism, 209, 210, 236, 237

Ibsen's *Brand*, 112-126

its central problem, 121-126

on the spirit of compromise, 122-126.

„ *Peer Gynt*, 127-138

its problem of self-realisation, 127, 135-138

Job, Drama of, 11-40

ludicrous interpretations of it, 13

probable date, 41

scene of, 14

its answer to the problem, 24, 26-29, 39

its fundamental problem, 15-25

its pessimism, 20, 21

Justice, Galsworthy's, 203-208

King Lear, 71-81

Kingsley, Charles, 43

Man and Superman, Bernard Shaw's, 165, 168

Militarism and its moral *impasse*, 159-162

„ Bernard Shaw on, 155-159, 170-174

„ Thomas Hardy on, 212 *et seq*

Mill, John Stuart, and the nature of evil, 37

Morality plays of the Middle Ages, 56-69

Morley, Viscount, 107, 125-126, 243

Nature *versus* Nurture, 139, 140, 149

Peer Gynt, Ibsen's, 127-138

Plato's *Apology*, circulation temporarily forbidden in India, 195

Power of Darkness, Tolstoi's, 139-151

Prometheus Bound, Æschylus's, 41-55

Prometheus Unbound, Shelley's, 99-111

Religion and the drama, 11, 12, 42, 56-60 *et seq*

Salter, W M, on *Everyman*, 65

Sermon on the Mount, 150, 156-161, 174, 175, 195

Shakespeare's *King Lear*, 71-81

its pessimism, 75

its treatment of the problem of undeserved suffering, 74-76, 80

„ meliorism, 240, 243-244

Shaw's *Androcles and the Lion*, 152-164

its problem of Christianity *versus* Militarism, 152, 159-164

„ “A new book of Genesis”—*Man and Superman*, 165, 167, 168

„ *Back to Methuselah*, 169-179

„ *Metabiological Plays*, 165-180

Shaw, his indictment of modern civilisation, 168-169,

on Education and Eugenics, 166, 167, 169

on Militarism, 155-159, 170-174

his plea for heresy, 194-196

his sanity and meliorism, 245

his *Saint Joan*, 181-196

its historical impartiality, 187, 194-195

Shelley's *Prometheus Unbound*, 99-111

its answer to the problem of undeserved suffering, 106-111

„ doctrine of spiritual resistance to evil, 108-111

„ iconoclasm, 106, 107

Symonds, John Addington, 11, 12, 51, 52, 54, 57

Tragedy, its aim, 79, 91, 95 *note*, 246

its essence, 194-195, 207-208, 242

Tagore, Rabindranath, 38

Tolstoi's *The Power of Darkness*, 139-151

its problem of Nature *versus* Nurture, 139, 140, 145-150

„ religious ideas, 146-151.

Undeserved suffering, the problem and attempted answers

The answer of the author of *Job*, 22-25, 26-29, 39

„ „ Æschylus, 52-55

„ „ Shakespeare, 74-76, 80

„ „ Shelley, 106-111

„ „ H G Wells, 30-39

„ „ the Theosophists and its unsatisfactoriness, 77,
78

Undying Fire, The, H G Wells's, 30-39

Voltaire on the necessity for a God, 242

Wells's, H G , *The Undying Fire*, 24, 30-39

on the problem of undeserved suffering, 31-35, 37

Wicksteed, P H , on *Peer Gynt*, 136-137

on "want of perception," 136-137, 207-208

Youth and war, 227



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